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news

significant shorts

Bones found in farm funeral pyre

What are believed to be pieces of human bone have been found in the remains of a "funeral pyre" at a remote east Devon farm where businessman Derek Leven shot himself in front of armed police, it emerged yesterday. Detectives trying to trace 61-year-old Mr Leven's cancer-stricken wife Pauline are now trying to establish whether there is any link between the remains found in the fire, and those discovered in a tin box in the boot of his car after last Friday's suicide. The latest discovery was made as detectives searched an area of scorched earth on grazing land at his West Yeo Moor Farm, near Witheridge.

Leading actor joins anti-EU campaign

The UK Independence Party has attracted its biggest celebrity supporter so far in *Rumpole of the Bailey* actor, Leo McKern. McKern, who will feature in the party's pre-election broadcast, is a former Tory voter who, according to the UKIP, "can no longer support John Major's insistence of putting party before country". The party is portraying itself as the only true vote for anyone wanting Britain to withdraw from the EU. Unlike Sir James Goldsmith's Referendum Party, the UKIP proposes withdrawal without a referendum.

Holidaymakers on way home

Three hundred British holidaymakers, stranded in the Dominican Republic because of a ventilation fault on their charter aircraft, were due to arrive home in the early hours of this morning. The Thomson package tourists had spent the previous night at hotels in the capital, Santo Domingo. Their aircraft was expected to arrive from Gatwick at 4am - 21 hours behind schedule. *Simon Calder*

Rise in unfair dismissal claims

The number of unfair dismissal cases heard at industrial tribunals rose by almost a half between 1991-92 and 1995-96.

In the year to March 1996, 9,956 unfair dismissal cases were heard at industrial tribunals in England and Wales, up almost 46 per cent from 6,809 in 1991-92. The number of successful verdicts increased by almost a quarter to 3,803 from 3,043. Labour's chief employment spokesman Ian McCartney said: "When he became Prime Minister, John Major said he wanted to create a country at ease with itself. These figures show that the Tories have created a country in fear of its future."

Mystery baby's mother found

The mother of a baby found by a newspaper delivery boy on Boxing Day has been traced. The child was abandoned in a hedge in Gateshead with her umbilical cord still intact. A spokesman for Northumbria police said: "We have established the identity of the mother of the baby. However, she has yet to be interviewed in order to establish the exact circumstances which led to the baby being abandoned."

Killer fireworks still on sale

New Year revellers could be putting their lives at risk by using dangerous imported fireworks, Labour's consumer affairs spokesman Nigel Griffiths warned. Despite the Government's ban on the aerial shells - the fireworks responsible for three deaths over the 5 November celebrations - Mr Griffiths said stocks were still available.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS	
Austria	£34.00
Belgium	£34.00
Canada	£34.00
France	£34.00
Germany	£34.00
Greece	£34.00
Italy	£34.00
Japan	£34.00
Netherlands	£34.00
Portugal	£34.00
Spain	£34.00
Sweden	£34.00
Switzerland	£34.00
USA	£34.00



Winter watch: Warden Dave Hunter keeps a look-out for salmon poachers near Winchester, Hampshire. The fish are vulnerable at this time of year as they make their way upstream to spawn. Photograph: Emma Bost

'Goodwill message' from Germany sparks storm

Tony Barber
Europe Editor

The first British-German dispute of 1997 broke out yesterday even before the new year had rung out the old. German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel came under fire from politicians of all major parties after he indicated that Germany would prefer pro-Europeans to win the general election.

"A general election will be held in Britain no later than May. The country must create clarity about its European policy," Mr Kinkel said. "Britain is part of Europe. Europe needs Britain."

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's centre-right coalition has never concealed its desire that Britain play a more positive role in the European Union. However, Mr Kinkel's statement, which appeared as part of a new year's message summarising key issues for German foreign policy in 1997, was unusually blunt for a minister to make publicly about another country, especially a close ally.

Pro-Europeans said they feared that the statement might play into the hands of Euro-sceptics, who are keen to portray continental Europeans as bullies and busy-bodies issuing instructions to Britain. Even

Paddy Ashdown, the unambiguously pro-European Liberal Democrat leader, criticised Mr Kinkel, saying his remarks were "unhelpful and almost certainly unwise".

The German foreign ministry denied the statement represented interference in British politics and said that it had been intended as an expression of goodwill. "In a



Klaus Kinkel: 'Britain must create clarity about its European policy'

European Union which aspires to become a political union, interference in [another country's] internal affairs is by definition hardly possible. But even if it were possible, it is certainly not intended," a spokesman said. "Britain must become clear on what depth of integration it wants to reach and, as Mr Kinkel said, we want Britain to be among those countries which, together with others, achieve as deep an integration as possible."

Conservative Party chairman Brian Mawhinney seized on Mr Kinkel's remarks as evidence that Britain's EU partners wanted a Labour victory rather than the re-election of a Tory government, which he said would "defend British interests". And he accused Labour leader Tony Blair of having "already said that ultimately he will do what the other European leaders tell him".

Labour ridiculed the assertion but said Mr Kinkel should not have made his comments. Alistair Darling, Labour's Treasury spokesman, said: "It is up to the British people to choose their next government. Klaus Kinkel's comments are a kind of desperate message from Europe that there is a British case to be put, and that British case is not being put just now because the Conservatives have weak leadership."

Minister who says the unsayable

Tony Barber

Klaus Kinkel is, as they say, no stranger to controversy. A trained lawyer and civil servant, he became Germany's Foreign Minister in May 1992 and quickly earned a reputation for impatience and saying the unsayable in public.

Exasperated by the inability of German and other Western governments to end the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, Mr

Kinkel, 60, once said: "One can be filled with cold rage because of one's helplessness."

His outspokenness forms a contrast to the quiet but effective diplomacy of his predecessor, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who served 18 years as foreign minister. Only last week Mr Kinkel issued a public warning to President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia not to crack down on opposition street protests, saying: "He should keep his

hands off the rights of the demonstrators."

However, Mr Kinkel's new year's message, with its implicit appeal to Britons to vote for pro-Europeans in next year's general election, was not especially controversial in Germany. Most politicians there would heartily concur that Germany wants Britain to overcome its internal divisions on Europe so it can join in building the European Union. For all his brusqueness, Mr

Kinkel is seen as something of a lightweight in domestic German politics. It is unlikely that he would have become Foreign Minister were it not that he belonged to Mr Genscher's Free Democrats (FDP), the junior centrist coalition partner of Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU). Yet he did not even join the FDP until 1991, and during his two-year spell as the party's leader from June 1993 the FDP came close to electoral oblivion.

Store is accused on E.coli scare

Steve Boggan
Chief Reporter

A supermarket chain was accused of scaremongering yesterday when it advised customers to return a whole array of products - including bread - in the wake of the Scottish E. coli epidemic.

Health officials described the move as unwarranted. Edinburgh-based Scotmid placed advertisements in newspapers offering to accept the return of cold meats, cooked pies, bakery products and uncooked sausages bought from any of its 61 outlets across Scotland.

Only four of its supermarkets had been identified as having stocked products made by John M. Barr and Sons of Wishaw, where the outbreak allegedly originated. MPs for the region said they were mystified by the decision. Dr John Reid, Labour MP for Motherwell North, said: "If 61 outlets were involved instead of four, why weren't we told before now?"

"All along, we have been told that only cooked meats were involved in the outbreak. If other products could be affected, why are we being told five weeks into the outbreak?"

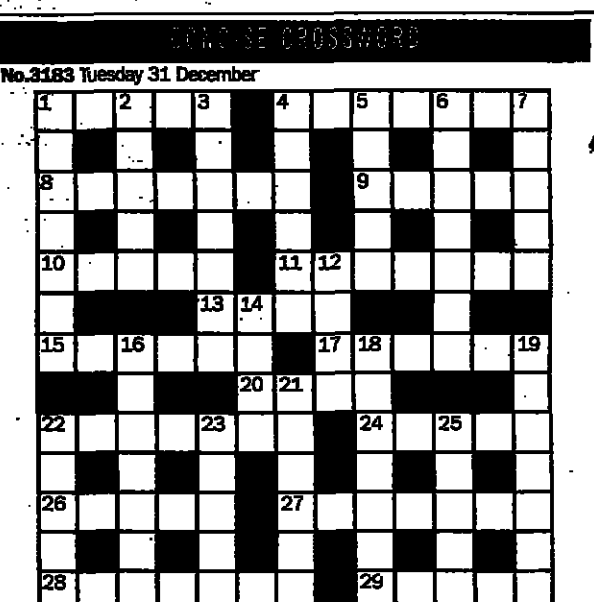
And if they aren't, then why is this supermarket chain causing unnecessary confusion all over Scotland?"

John Brown, spokesman for Scotmid, said the company was merely being cautious on behalf of its customers. "There is a lot of confusion over E. coli and we are just playing on the safe side. From the beginning, we have told our customers we would be prepared to accept the return of any goods they were worried about."

"Last week, a board meeting decided to extend that offer across all our stores and to include frozen products. After all, who knows what might be lurking at the back of the freezer?" He denied the operation may have been a public relations exercise that had backfired.

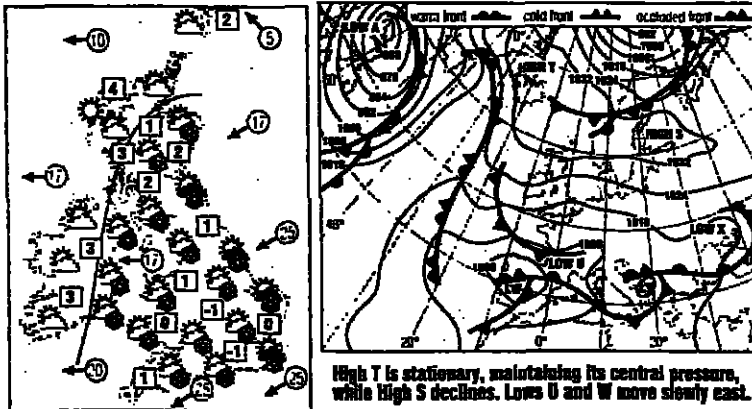
Today, Professor Hugh Pennington, who leads the inquiry into the outbreak, is due to present his preliminary findings to the Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Forsyth.

Last night, the Scottish Office said there had been no new confirmed cases of E. coli poisoning since 20 December. So far, 409 people have shown symptoms of the illness, while 258 have been recorded as confirmed cases.



- ACROSS**
- Purchaser (5)
 - Soundly reasoned (7)
 - Wash (7)
 - Part of shoe (5)
 - Contend (5)
 - Tidal river mouth (7)
 - Peer (4)
 - Planet (6)
 - Tree-lined approach (6)
 - Title (4)
 - Hide (7)
 - Recess (5)
 - Conclude (5)
 - Rich (7)
 - After due time (7)
 - Go into (5)
- DOWN**
- Songs (7)
 - Of tender years (5)
 - British ruminant (3,4)
 - Food store (6)
 - Haggard (5)
 - Team leader (7)
 - Goods vehicle (5)
 - Shut noisily (4)
 - Former Indian coin (4)
 - Melodic (7)
 - Undertaking (7)
 - Voter (7)
 - Nut tree (6)
 - Ascend (5)
 - White heron (5)
 - Play unfairly (5)

Solution to Saturday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Witch, 4 Why (Which way?), 8 Unicorn, 9 Eagle, 10 Tape, 11 Hysteria, 12 Fortune-teller, 15 Tiresome, 17 Ruby, 20 Libra, 21 Laundry, 22 Flat, 23 Notes. DOWN: 1 Whimper, 2 Tool, 3 Honeydew melon, 4 Rebel, 5 Yo-yo, 19 Quil.



High T is stationary, maintaining its central pressure, while High S declines. Low U and W move slowly east.

British Isles weather

Aberdeen	5	3	Brighton	1	3	Exeter	2	3	Liverpool	1	4	Northdowny	1	5
Anglesey	5	4	Bristol	1	3	Glasgow	1	4	Lizard	5	5	Southampton	1	5
Ayr	1	4	Cardiff	5	1	Greenwich	1	4	London	5	2	Southsea	1	2
Belfast	5	3	Cardiff	5	3	Hove	1	5	Manchester	5	3	St Leonards	1	1
Birmingham	2	5	Derby	1	3	Isleworth	5	3	Newcastle	5	3	St Leonards	1	1
Birmingham	1	3	Edinburgh	5	4	Jarvis	5	4	Nottingham	2	5	Trafford	1	5
Bournemouth	1	2	Edinburgh	2	4	Leamington	1	5	Plymouth	2	4	Trafford	1	5

Forget tonight, what will you be doing on New Year's Eve 1999?

Glenda Cooper

As you gear up for tonight's festivities, your thoughts may well turn to seeing in the new millennium. But unless you have already booked your celebrations - or have the odd million pounds to spare - you are probably too late.

It was as far back as 1989 that Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, told an Arts Council lunch: "If it is at all possible, purchase an option on any dance hall you can find for the night of 31 December, 1999."

Seven years on, many big venues have been snapped up. Forget Tower Bridge - it was booked this year.

Madame Tussaud's has already gone and the Royal Albert Hall was reserved as far back as 1975. The QE2 has already been grabbed by the Millennium Society of Washington for a 20-day cruise at an estimated £300,000 a day and even DisneyWorld, in Florida, has sold out its 17,000 hotel rooms.

And for those spectacular places left, the competition may rule out all but the most wealthy.

A spokesman for British Airways said that it had been inundated with inquiries for Concorde seats but had yet to start taking bookings. Your chances of acquiring a flight however are slim. There is already a list as long as the M4, according to BA, and the cost for an aeroplane carrying 100 people "will start in five figures".

"We will be chartering seven aircraft," said the BA spokesman. "We are thinking of having a triple celebration, one in the UK, one mid-air and one in New York, but we will be making a decision later as to the best way."

Edinburgh, which this year will play host to more than half a million visitors, is also looking to be one of the premium millennium cities, with the Virgin Group sponsoring the 1999 Hogmanay Festival.

This year alone demand for hotel rooms in the city was so great that some of the visitors have had to be placed in accommodation up to 50 miles away.

Hotels and bed-and-breakfasts have already received bookings for 1999 but organisers are playing their cards close to their chest as to what will happen on that New Year's Eve.

"We have not announced what will happen yet," said Abigail Carney, spokeswoman for Unique Events. "But Edinburgh wants to be one of the millennium cities and will definitely be a great place to be at that party."

The Savoy Hotel in London could have been booked twice or three times over but at present is not taking reservations until it has decided what exactly will take place that night. The New York Marriott hotel got its first reservation in 1983 - two years before it was built.

Sadly for football fans, Wembley Stadium has ruled out any one being able to book it for the big event. "We have had lots of inquiries," a spokesman said. "Now we have the national stadium it would be possible to have one of the world's biggest parties but it is not available."



Out with a bang: Fireworks explode over Edinburgh Castle during a New Year celebration. The city has yet to decide on what it will do in 1999

commodation up to 50 miles away.

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The 50th floor of Canary Wharf Tower, the tallest building in Britain, is similarly out of bounds.

For the more adventurous, the Pyramids are sure to be a hit as is the Grand Canyon, although hotels there are not taking bookings until 1998.

According to William Deakin of the party organisers Juliana's, one enterprising individual has booked an island in the Maldives although more impractical ideas such as a party in Lapland have had to be turned down by the company.

However, there are some venues still available for the determined party-goer. The Science Museum is still taking bookings for its different galleries which normally go at around £4,500, but are likely to fetch higher prices for New Year's Eve.

The Millennium of London cruiser, launched by the Queen in October, is also considering "something spectacular" which will probably work out at £500 per person.

However the prize for the most enterprising bid to see in the millennium goes to the tiny nation of Kiribati in the South Pacific. It quietly moved the International Date Line to its eastern extremity, Caroline Island, in 1993, trumping its Pacific neighbours to be the first to usher in the new millennium.

Tonga, which was happily expecting lucrative parties at the International Date Line Hotel in Nukualofa, is not amused. Neither are the Chatham Islands, for as a result of the move Kiribati will now see in the millennium 22 minutes before the Chathams, and 80 minutes before Tonga.

But despite protests, the Royal Greenwich Observatory and cartographers have accepted Kiribati's line change, and appeals to the United Nations have met with the response that the date line, decided in 1884, is beyond its control.

Pacific islands aside, most of us however will be trying to have the time of our lives in the most exotic place we can afford. See you at Trafalgar Square.

Marianne Macdonald
Media Correspondent

The BBC rounded off its Christmas victory on Sunday with a final episode of *Only Fools and Horses* which attracted more viewers than any programme of 1996, including *Euro 96*.

The farewell to Del Boy and Rodney had 21.1m viewers at its peak and triggered the year's largest power surge. Overnight figures - which do not include those who viewed the comedy - were 21.5m, reaching 22.1m in the final half-hour. That was four million more than the England vs Germany match in *Euro 96*.

It won more viewers even than the Christmas Day episode of *Only Fools and Horses*, watched live by 18.7m people, or the December 27 episode, watched by 18.45m. Together they were the top three programmes of the Christmas period, the BBC said.

After the Trotters said farewell on Sunday, viewers caused a 1,600-megawatt power surge as they made tea and coffee - enough to power Birmingham for 15 minutes, a National Grid spokesman said.

He added: "It was the biggest power surge of the year. The usual surge following an edition of a top programme like *EastEnders* is something between 800 and 1,000 megawatts. It is unusual for a non-sporting programme to get such a reaction - but Del Boy and Rodney actually beat the *Euro 96* matches."

The biggest recorded power surge was 2,800 megawatts, following England's World Cup semi-final penalty shoot-out against Germany in 1990.

Yesterday the BBC hailed the success of the comedy which has seen seven series and 12 Christmas specials since it started in 1981. "We're delighted this proved a triple treat for our viewers," a spokeswoman said.

ITV fought back with 11.9m viewers for its James Bond film, *The Living Daylights*, but with eight of the top 10 programmes on Christmas Day alone, the BBC emerged the victor in the holiday ratings battle.

This party will be literally dynamite

David Osborne
New York

For years, New York has dominated the attention of Americans on New Year's Eve. Brash Las Vegas was left out. Now, the Nevada city has come up with an unbeatable way of attracting everybody's attention: blowing up a huge hotel as the crowning moment of a fireworks display.

New Year's Eve in New York's Times Square could be a bit of a let-down tonight. (The main attraction, as always, will be the dropping of a giant, sparkling ball at mid-

night). In Las Vegas, however, the entrance of 1997 promises to be dynamite, with the implosion of an 11-storey, 900-room hotel on the Strip.

With a little help from the ageing Hacienda Hotel and a firm of demolition experts, the desert city may this year have found the ideal gimmick finally to eclipse the Big Apple. Earmarked for destruction to make way for a new 4,000-room gambling resort, the once-grand but now faded Hacienda will serve initially as the scaffold for a giant fireworks display with a glittering waterfall of light that will run the length of the building.

At midnight - Eastern Time - the pyrotechnics will culminate with a loud bang: a fireball will erupt from the hotel roof, after which the entire structure will be reduced to dust in front of an expected 300,000 revellers.

The decision to send the Hacienda to Hotel Heaven at midnight Eastern Time - 9pm in Nevada - is officially explained as a police tactic to minimise the risk of drunken antics on the Strip later in the evening. Clearly, however, the timing is also meant as a direct challenge to New York.

"You can always stand in

Times Square and watch the ball drop, but I think we offer a little more diversification in things that are fun," Kara Kelley of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce said yesterday. "Coming to Las Vegas on New Year's Eve is now something that people put on their calendar."

New York is trying to fight back. This year, the Times Square ball will be bigger and brighter than before and a light and laser show is also promised. But already one TV network - Rupert Murdoch's Fox chain - has opted to forsake the familiar Times Square fare for the big kaboom in the Nevada desert.

Fares are slashed in new railway race to north

Louise Jury

Nipping north for Hogmanay will be far cheaper in future as one of the new railway companies announced a cut-price London to Edinburgh fare of £19 yesterday.

Though next Sunday's start date is too late for a Caledonian New Year, the move by the Great North Eastern Railway (GNER) was welcomed by other rail operators as proof that privatisation was good news for travellers.

But it also signalled a fight back against air competitors which have given the railways a run for their money. EasyJet has offered £29 single fares from Luton airport, north of London, to Scotland.

Where in the days of steam, the great race to the north pitted rival rail companies against each other for the fastest time to Scotland, the battle a century later is over prices, with train and plane the bitter rivals.

The GNER will introduce the new rate from Sunday on trains from London's Kings Cross to Edinburgh, Motherwell and Glasgow on the former InterCity East Coast line, British Rail's old flagship route.

The move should reverse the advantage between rail and the cheapest air routes. The cheapest previous one-way fare from London to Edinburgh or Glasgow price was £45. The cost of



Flying Scotsman: The battle with the airlines revives the competitive spirit of the great age of steam.

travelling to Dundee will also be cut to £23 from £54 and for Aberdeen or Inverness the price will also be £23, compared with £59, as long as tickets are booked seven days in advance. A single National Express coach ticket to Edinburgh is £13.

Christopher Garnett, GNER's chief executive, said: "Nobody else can offer better value for money. Going by rail

is cheaper than flying, much quicker than coach travel and, at this price, a real alternative to taking the car. With these new fares we aim to show that rail travel is Scotland is not as expensive as people believe."

The introduction of the heavily discounted fares from London follows the recent success of similar tickets from Scotland. GNER claimed it attracted

thousands of passengers to choose the train in preference to the plane.

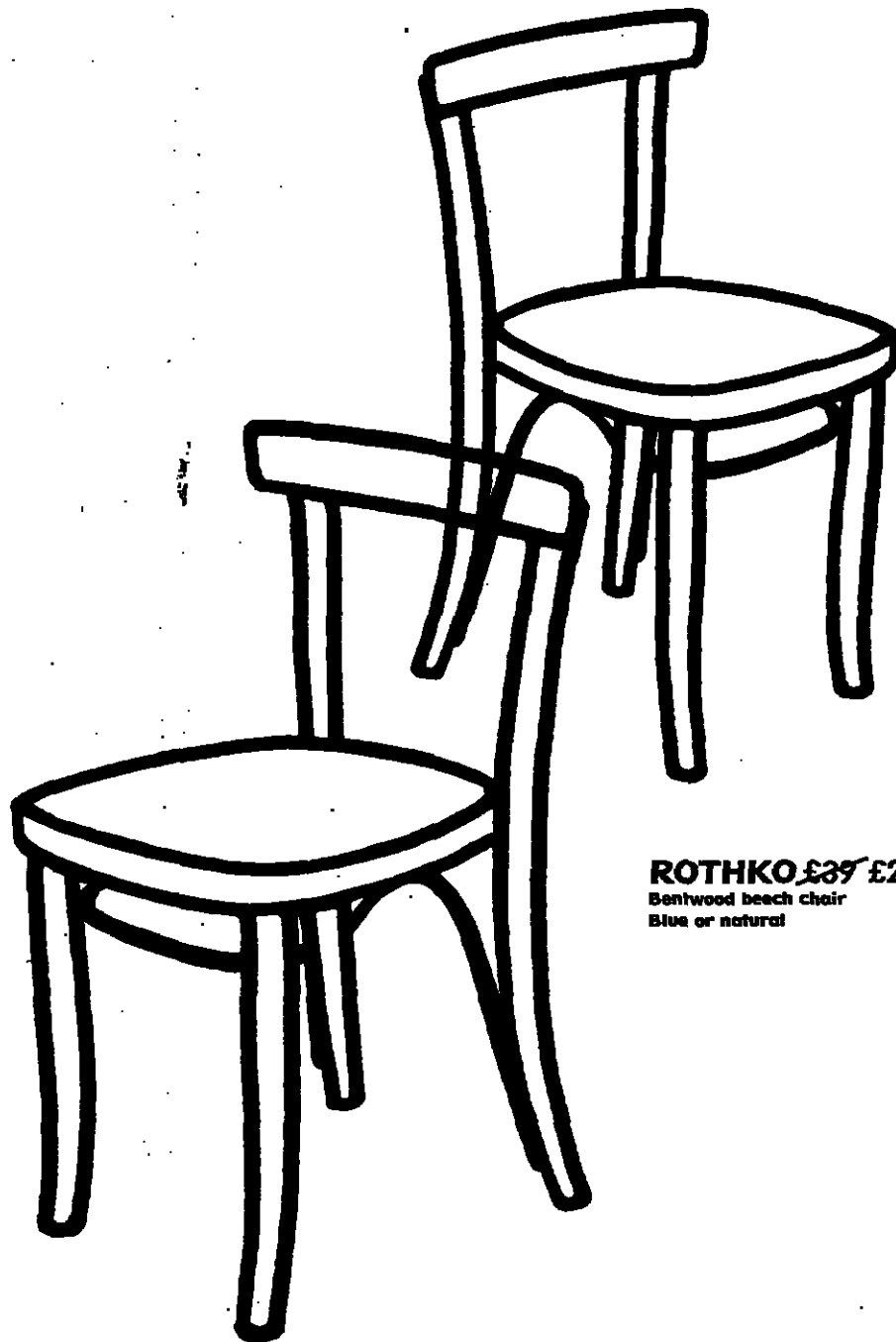
However, an EasyJet spokesman said they had carried 500,000 passengers in 1996 and would increase capacity to 1 million next year. "These people have come from somewhere," he said.

GNER's price cuts were a sign they were proving a challenge, the EasyJet spokesman said. But as a quarter of its day returns were business travel, mainly to Edinburgh, it was not unduly worried. "It's pushing it to do a day return rail trip to Scotland".

Price cuts elsewhere on the rail network were difficult, though not impossible to find. From tomorrow, Cardiff Railway is to extend a scheme which offers half-price rail travel to unemployed adults to include jobless teenagers.

And Jane Lawrie, of Midland Main Line, said the company recently introduced a £20 ticket for up to four people going anywhere in its area. "People were very sceptical about privatisation. But fares are certainly not going up and in many cases are going down."

Anglia Railways goes into the private sector on Sunday so has not introduced new fares. But it has continued to promote previous cut-price offers such as a £16.50 day return from Norwich to London.



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news

First there were the three tenors — then came the bricklayer's son

Marianne Macdonald
Arts Correspondent

Most singers would give their eye teeth to be hotly promoted by a record company, but a television documentary this week offers a chilling insight into the reality of life for opera's latest discovery, Roberto Alagna.

EMI wants this dashing son of a bricklayer to be the "fourth tenor" in succession to Luciano Pavarotti, José Carreras and Plácido Domingo. But viewers of the Channel 4 film this Sunday will be left wondering how anyone can stand up to the schedule such star-dom requires.

For EMI, 33-year-old Alagna is a publicist's dream. Born in Paris and discovered in a pizzeria, he had no contact with professional opera until his mid-twenties. After the death of his first wife he got engaged to the beautiful Romanian opera singer, Angela Gheorghiu.

Aimée Gautreau of Angel EMI records reveals his great attraction: "Not only is he a great tenor, he's a hunk. When we first became aware of Alagna's relationship with Angela our first reaction was 'this is a great love story and we should use this'. It's a story the entertainment press is going to want."

In Channel 4's film, Alagna does no less than four recordings for EMI in a year, squeezed into a schedule which never appears to let up. He races from one country to the next trying to fit interviews, launches, rehearsals and recordings around prepa-



Is there room for a fourth? The great tenors make a formidable trio. From left, Plácido Domingo, José Carreras and Luciano Pavarotti

ration for his much-hyped debut at the Metropolitan Opera House.

At one point he bumps into the great tenor whom EMI is grooming him to replace. Pavarotti asks after Alagna's career. "Piano, piano," says Alagna modestly. "Piano forte!" jokes Pavarotti.

But the strain is showing. Alagna walks out during a recording of *Romeo et Juliette*

with Gheorghiu in Toulouse. Days later he is forced to drive overnight to Paris to rehearse Jonathan Miller's *La Bohème*. When he arrives he realises he is also booked to sing at a government party. He cancels the rehearsal and arrives at the party, only to find he is too late to perform.

Miller is displaced. "The more highly paid and famous these people become, the faster

and looser they play with the schedule," he tells the cameras.

Still the pressure increases with Alagna working 20-hour days in a bid to "please everyone". Later he is forced to cancel performances at Covent Garden, New York and Geneva, citing exhaustion.

Meanwhile, the crucial first night at the Met in April does not go well; Alagna has a cold. The audience are unforgiving. "He's supposed to be the fourth tenor, and that wasn't the voice of the fourth tenor," says one, interviewed during the intermission.

Alagna walks off stage, and the atmosphere is that of a wake, and the film shows Gheorghiu racing after his dejected figure. Back at EMI, however, the executives plot on. They do not see his botched United States debut as a problem, and they have a new idea to market his rags to riches rise.

"It's a great Rocky story. I think we should play up on that," says one woman. "Good planning," agrees another.

A poll of 1,300 listeners to Classic FM radio revealed yesterday that EMI's promotion of Alagna was not a success — he received four votes to his wife's six and did not make the top 10 ranking, headed by the Swedish tenor Jussi Björling, who died in 1960. Domingo came third after the soprano Maria Callas, who died in 1977, while neither Pavarotti nor Carreras made the top ten. Classic FM presenter Hugh Macpherson said it was "extremely telling that our opera buffs have voted resoundingly for performers of the past".



Star in the making: Roberto Alagna is being heavily promoted by EMI, but the road to fame is not entirely smooth. Photograph: Clive Barde

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Gross p.a.	Net p.a.	Gross p.a.	Net p.a.
£1 - £499	1.00%	0.80%	0.60%
£500 - £4,999	1.00%	1.00%	0.80%
£5,000 - £9,999	1.20%	1.20%	1.00%
£10,000 - £24,999	1.40%	1.40%	1.20%
£25,000 - £49,999	1.60%	1.60%	1.40%
£50,000 +	1.80%	1.80%	1.60%
CapitalBuilder		Special Renewal Bond	
Gross p.a.	Net p.a.	Gross p.a.	Net p.a.
£1,000 - £4,999	4.00%	4.00%	3.92%
£5,000 - £9,999	4.20%	4.20%	4.12%
£10,000 - £24,999	4.40%	4.40%	4.32%
£25,000 - £49,999	4.60%	4.60%	4.52%
£50,000 +	4.80%	4.80%	4.72%
Monthly Income		InvestDirect	
Gross p.a.	Net p.a.	Gross p.a.	Net p.a.
£1,000 - £4,999	3.60%	5.00%	4.00%
£5,000 - £9,999	3.80%	5.20%	4.20%
£10,000 - £24,999	4.00%	5.40%	4.40%
£25,000 - £49,999	4.20%	5.60%	4.60%
£50,000 +	4.40%	5.80%	4.80%
TESSA		Bonus 60*	
Gross p.a.	Net p.a.	Gross p.a.	Net p.a.
£25 - £9,000	6.50%	6.50%	6.44%
TESSA 2		Monthly	
Gross p.a.	Net p.a.	Gross p.a.	Net p.a.
£25 - £9,000	6.50%	6.50%	6.44%
Bonus Saver*		Smart 2 Save	
Gross p.a.	Net p.a.	Gross p.a.	Net p.a.
£25 +	6.50%	4.50%	3.60%
The Smart Account			
Gross p.a.	Net p.a.		
£1 +	4.50%		
Smart 2 Save			
Gross p.a.	Net p.a.		
£1 +	4.50%		

Bonuses will be paid monthly. The TESSA 2 and Bonus Saver rates are calculated on the basis of a 10% annual bonus. The Smart 2 Save rate is calculated on the basis of a 10% annual bonus. The Smart Account rate is calculated on the basis of a 10% annual bonus. The TESSA 2 and Bonus Saver* rates are calculated on the basis of a 10% annual bonus. The Smart 2 Save rate is calculated on the basis of a 10% annual bonus. The Smart Account rate is calculated on the basis of a 10% annual bonus.

NEW RATES FOR BUSINESS INVESTORS

BusinessInvestor		Treasury Account	
Gross p.a.	Net p.a.	Gross p.a.	Net p.a.
£2,000 - £1,999	3.00%	2.20%	1.70%
£2,000 - £9,999	3.40%	2.40%	1.90%
£10,000 - £24,999	3.80%	2.60%	2.10%
£25,000 - £49,999	4.20%	2.80%	2.30%
£50,000 +	4.60%	3.00%	2.50%
PortfolioInvestor			
Gross p.a.	Net p.a.		
£1 - £9,999	5.70%		
£10,000 +	6.00%		

*The account balance on the BusinessInvestor and PortfolioInvestor accounts will be paid at 0.5% per annum. The Treasury Account rate is calculated on the basis of a 10% annual bonus. The PortfolioInvestor rate is calculated on the basis of a 10% annual bonus.

NEW RATES FOR ACCOUNTS NO LONGER AVAILABLE

Account Name	Balance	Gross p.a.	Net p.a.	Account Name	Balance	Gross p.a.	Net p.a.
***Asset Reserve	£2,000 - £4,999	3.00%	2.40%	BonusBuilder	£1 - £499	1.00%	0.80%
	£5,000 - £9,999	3.40%	2.72%		£500 - £4,999	1.20%	1.00%
	£10,000 - £24,999	3.80%	3.04%		£5,000 - £9,999	1.40%	1.20%
	£25,000 - £49,999	4.20%	3.36%		£10,000 - £24,999	1.60%	1.40%
	£50,000 +	4.60%	3.68%		£25,000 +	1.80%	1.60%
***TESSA Bond & Linked Bond	£3,000 - £9,000	6.50%	5.20%	IncomeBond	£2,000 - £9,999	4.10%	3.28%
TESSA Monthly Income Bond	£3,000 - £9,000	6.10%	4.88%		£10,000 - £24,999	4.30%	3.48%
TESSA Flexible Savings	£25 - £9,000	6.50%	5.20%	TaxFree Option Instant	£500 - £9,999	4.30%	3.48%
CapitalBuilder 180	£500 - £4,999	4.20%	3.36%		£10,000 - £24,999	4.50%	3.60%
	£5,000 - £9,999	4.40%	3.52%		£25,000 +	4.70%	3.80%
	£10,000 - £24,999	4.60%	3.68%	TaxFree Option 90 Day	£500 - £4,999	4.00%	3.20%
	£25,000 +	4.80%	3.84%		£5,000 - £9,999	4.20%	3.36%
CapitalBuilder 90	£500 - £4,999	4.00%	3.20%	TaxFree Option 180 Day	£500 - £4,999	4.20%	3.36%
	£5,000 - £9,999	4.20%	3.36%		£5,000 - £9,999	4.40%	3.52%
	£10,000 - £24,999	4.40%	3.52%		£10,000 - £24,999	4.60%	3.68%
	£25,000 +	4.60%	3.68%		£25,000 +	4.80%	3.84%
CapitalBuilder 90 Monthly 111/111-Yearly	£500 - £4,999	3.60%	2.88%	Double Bonus	£500 - £4,999	3.00%	2.40%
	£5,000 - £9,999	3.80%	3.04%		£5,000 - £9,999	3.20%	2.56%
	£10,000 - £24,999	4.00%	3.20%		£10,000 - £24,999	3.40%	2.72%
	£25,000 +	4.20%	3.36%		£25,000 +	3.60%	2.88%
				Subscription Share	£1 - £200 per month (not £400 per month)	6.50%	5.20%

*The account balance on the BusinessInvestor and PortfolioInvestor accounts will be paid at 0.5% per annum. The Treasury Account rate is calculated on the basis of a 10% annual bonus. The PortfolioInvestor rate is calculated on the basis of a 10% annual bonus.

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Nationwide
THE BUILDING SOCIETY.

Social work shake-up focuses on child abuse

Jojo Moyes

A government White Paper proposing a shake-up in standards among social workers and aimed to curb the risk of child-abuse tragedies is to be published within weeks, it was announced yesterday.

The Secretary of State for Health, Stephen Dorrell, said yesterday that he wanted staff to refocus their efforts, concentrating on potential trouble spots in high-risk families.

Mr Dorrell has been prompted to act by recent well-publicised cases highlighting failures by social workers. He believes that warning signs of potential trouble in families should be vigorously followed up and better understood.

"In good children's services, there isn't a problem, but we need to ensure that services respond quickly and effectively," Mr Dorrell said yesterday. "We need to make certain they are run according to a proper order of priorities and a clear sense of what is important."

He added: "These social

workers have some of the most difficult jobs to do and we must acknowledge that and also ensure that they are part of this big social service that is a much more substantial commitment than it was a quarter of a century ago."

"It's a question of recognising the signs and responding effectively and quickly, but not becoming a prisoner of political correctness."

The White Paper, to be published next February, follows several child-abuse scandals, including the recent case of Rikki Neave who was cruelly ill-

treated by his mother and found killed near his home (a separate report into the way social workers looked after him is due to be published next week) and those uncovered by *The Independent* at children's homes in North Wales.

In June, the Government announced a judicial inquiry into the scandal of the homes in Cwyl, where more than 100 children were abused. At least 12 former residents have died in circumstances related to their experiences.

Children as young as six were abandoned to the care of paedophiles, and were too afraid to talk of their experiences for years, while those who turned to the authorities were often ignored.

Public confidence in social services has diminished because of repeated failures to prevent similar tragedies. Workers have also been accused of unnecessary interventions into family life while failing to prevent real abuses.

The service nationally costs £9bn a year to run — 10 times

as much in real terms than 25 years ago and more than all National Health Service family care.

Mr Dorrell said that it was necessary to focus on departments which were not delivering standards that the public was entitled to expect.

"The purpose of the White Paper will be to turn the spotlight on the value for money we get for that huge commitment to social care," he added.

Last month, Mr Dorrell confirmed that ministers were also considering ways in which social workers could be employed by charities and companies instead of local authorities as at present.

Proposals that would map out a future for local authorities as enablers and commissioners of services are also thought to be included in the White Paper.

A Government Green Paper also due out in the next few weeks will explore ways of providing better care for the mentally ill through improved links between health and social services departments.

Pupils urged to do more at home

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

The Government is to issue new guidelines on homework after research found pupils who studied most outside school hours did better in exams.

The guidance, to be published next month, will encourage schools and local authorities to have clear policies stressing the importance of "well-directed" and properly marked homework, though it will stop short of dictating a precise amount of time children should spend studying at home.

Instead, it will provide examples of good practice drawn from a study comparing two groups of secondary schools — seven picked out last year by Chris Woodhead, chief schools inspector, as high flying and seven with an average record.

The research found a clear correlation between exam success and the number of pupils given more than six hours' homework a week.

The Government's move comes a year after David Blunkett, shadow education spokesman, announced that Labour would lay down specific guidelines on homework hours. Mr Blunkett said last night: "All the evidence from overseas is that homework makes the biggest difference in overcoming socio-economic differences in family background."

Plans to give parents and teachers greater freedom to set up their own schools from scratch may be included in the Conservative's election manifesto.

Lords leap to defend their old school ties

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

The festive spirit was wearing thin in the great houses of England last night as Labour seized on the sixth day of Christmas to publish a "Tory Lords-leaping" report on the privileged backgrounds of hereditary peers.

Far from being in touch with the "common man", as Viscount Cranborne claimed recently, most of the 402 Conservatives who inherited their titles have spent their lives at public school and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, according to the shadow Home Secretary, Jack Straw.

Of these 402 peers, 228 went to Eton and a further 66 to Harrow, Winchester, Stowe, Marlborough, Westminster or Rugby. More than 40 per cent went to Oxford or Cambridge, according to Labour's survey, and only three are women.

Even more embarrassingly, one lord upon whose vote the Government relies owes his title to a £20,000 donation to Conservative Central Office. Lord Vestey's great grandfather bought his peerage with the money in 1922.

Mr Straw attacked recent remarks in defence of hereditary peers by Lord Cranborne, the Leader of the House of Lords, as "ridiculous". He pointed to the fact that without the help of Tory backwoodsmen the Government would not have been able to force through deeply unpopular policies such as the poll tax and the sale of MoD homes.

"This is not just political satire. It has a serious political purpose for the Tories. It is simply unacceptable for modern British democracy to be conducted in this way," he said.

Viscount Cranborne, the son



Jack Straw: Attacked Tories as out of touch

nated by professional politicians. "Increasingly the amateur politicians who make up the hereditary peerage are coming to represent the common man in Parliament," he said.

Last night Lord Cranborne said things were changing rapidly, and there was no reason why hereditary peers should be out of touch. "You will find that a lot of people who went to Eton have pretty run-of-the-mill jobs these days."

He was not against reform of the House of Lords or even the abolition of hereditary peerages, he added, but Labour's plans were unwelcome.

He wanted to see a select committee set up to discuss any changes. "They will create the biggest quango in the land. Quangos have their place but I think they ought to be controlled by Parliament rather than being part of it," he said.

DAILY POEM

What Every Woman Should Carry

By Maura Dooley

My mother gave me the prayer to Saint Theresa.
I added a used Tube ticket, Kleenex,
several Polo mints (furry), a Tampoon, pesetas,
a florin. Not wishing to be presumptuous,
not trusting you either, a pack of 3.
I have a pen. There is space for my guardian
angel, she has to fold her wings. Puss-purr.
A key. A grinch. At what I said didn't say
when once you needed didn't need me. Anadin.
A credit card. His face the last time,
my impatience, my useless youth.
That empty sack, my heart. A box of matches.

Today's poem from the volumes shortlisted for the TS Eliot Prize comes from Maura Dooley's second collection, *Kissing a Bone* (Bloodaxe). She is now editing an anthology of love poetry for Bloodaxe, *The Honey Gatherers*.

هكذا من الأناطلة

Education officials told to learn English

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

Government education officials are being given lessons in the use of plain English after a study found that the texts of Britain's flagship job-training qualifications were riddled with obscure jargon and mangled grammar.

So far 130 people involved in writing material for National Vocational Qualifications have been sent back to school for "workshops on language issues". They have been taught how to explain NVQs in a way that is more likely to attract potential trainees than to send them scurrying for their dictionaries, or put them off entirely.

In NVQ-speak, information is not given but "imparted", and when a mistake is made

the result is not a correction but a "rectifying action". Trainees are expected to "action" tasks and to "originate evidence" - if they can find their way through the literature.

NVQs, launched 10 years ago, offer work-based training in areas ranging from hairdressing to engineering, based on industry-set standards. The Government wanted all employers to offer them by 2000, but so far only 7 per cent do so. By that date, 60 per cent of the workforce were to be trained to NVQ level 3 or equivalent, but only 40 per cent have reached that standard.

A report on NVQs published earlier this year amid fears over standards said that candidates were deterred by "complex, jargon-ridden language", while a computer analysis of the phrases and vocabulary used found they bore little relation to everyday English.

The jargon that leaves students dazed

Two examples of 'performance criteria':

From NVQ level 3 in engineering, assembly
"Materials presented to the assembly operation are completely compliant with the operational specification."

From NVQ level 2 in care

"The forms which designate the care and the beneficiaries which may be expressed in these and their distribution are not restricted to the actual persons in society."

Details of the language lessons emerged in a written parliamentary answer from Education and Employment minister James Paice. Mr Paice said that those attending the classes had included 27 officials from the Department for Education and Employment,

56 people from bodies which accredit vocational qualifications, and 47 representatives of industry bodies, including 12 consultants. He confirmed in an answer to the Labour education spokesman Bryan Davies that the cost of the workshops was £116,000.

Researchers analysing the texts of the qualifications on behalf of the department fed all 2 million words from the database of current NVQs into a computer and compared them with a database of 200 million words from newspapers, magazines, books and broadcasting.

The study revealed that details of the standards trainees were expected to reach were often phrased in an opaque or ambiguous way, while the grammar employed dispensed with the tried and tested conventions of subject, verb and object.

Mr Davies yesterday condemned the need to spend taxpayers' money on training officials "how to write properly". He said: "It is quite extraordinary that those responsible for educating people in basic communication skills need

to take lessons themselves in how to communicate."

Professor Alan Smithers of Brunel University, a leading critic of NVQs, claimed that confusion had arisen after consultants were used to "translate" standards set by employers into qualifications terminology. He said: "It gets in the way of what the employers and candidates want and is a big digression from the essential purpose of these qualifications."

Obscure language is one of the key criticisms levelled at NVQs, which have also come under fire for being expensive, too undemanding and unpopular. The qualifications, a central part of the Government's drive to improve Britain's skills base and competitiveness, are to be relaunched this spring in an attempt to increase take-up.

Forests to grow from old greeting cards

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

After a record number of Christmas cards were sent this year, nature conservationists are hoping that they will be recycled into new forests around the country.

Two of Britain's biggest high street names, the Post Office and Boots, are providing collection points on their premises for people to get rid of their cards throughout January and February. The money raised through the recycling effort will fund tree-planting projects.

For the first time the number of items sent through the mail in the four weeks running up to Christmas exceeded 2 billion, and this was dominated by Christmas cards. The figure works out at more than 30 items for every adult and child in the country.

Up till now almost all of these cards have ended up being dumped on landfill sites with the rest of the weekly household refuse. But from Thursday this week 6,200 post offices, one-third of the total in Britain, and all 1,225 Boots stores will take the old cards.

The two organisations have combined with recycling companies to turn them into cardboard packaging material. Experience from previous, smaller-scale Christmas card recycling schemes make them believe that they can collect several thousand tons.

Money raised by the scheme will go to the 12 English Community Forests, the Woodland Trust in Scotland and the British Conservation Trust for Volunteers in Wales and Northern Ireland - all for tree-planting schemes.

The Community Forests are areas on the outskirts of large towns and cities where the Government's Countryside Commission, the Forestry Commission and local councils are collaborating to create new urban fringe woodlands for people and wildlife.

The cards will only fetch a few pence for each ton recycled, so this grand rescue effort can only raise tens of thousands of pounds, however successful it is. But the organisers argue that theirs is a better alternative than throwing them all away.



Fleet's hope: James Spark, 16, one of the Whitby apprentices, hopes five years' training will make him 'the youngest skipper in the country' Photograph: Steve Forrest/Guzelian

Career that's all at sea

Esther Leach

They shivered in the biting wind that whipped around the harbour and began to doubt whether they had done the right thing. But eight young men had already signed up to become Britain's first port-based apprentice sea fishermen.

They will be trained on trawlers of the Whitby fleet in North Yorkshire whose skippers have volunteered to teach them to ensure their industry survives. Arnold Locker, who runs Locker's Trawlers and owns seven trawlers, said: "Put bluntly, we were going down a sticky road. Our business alone has invested £1m in boats this year but the industry's got such a negative image we couldn't get the new recruits."

"Captains of fishing vessels have a very different job from 10 years ago. Now it's all computers and satellite navigation systems. We need really qualified people running these boats."

At the end of last year several Whitby fishermen approached a training organisation, the Yorkshire and Humber Ports GTA, and secured the support of the North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Council.

Rude awakening for air traffic control

Air-traffic controllers with sleep disorders are escaping medical checks and dozing off at work, an expert has claimed.

People with the lives of passengers in their hands are hiding the fact that they have sleep problems because they fear for their jobs, warned Professor Neil Douglas, director of the Scottish National Sleep Laboratory in Edinburgh.

He told the annual meeting of the British Sleep Society in London: "The traditional approach has been to bin patients as people who are either lazy or who don't have a problem. I have had air-traffic controllers, bus drivers and lorry drivers as patients. All of them have admitted that they have fallen asleep doing their job."

But, he said, such people can be successfully treated and carry on working.

Air-traffic controllers undergo the same rigorous medical checks as pilots to spot any problems that might pose a hazard to the public. Their hours are also carefully structured to ensure maximum alertness - no more than two hours on duty without a break, no more than two successive night shifts, no shifts longer than 10 hours, or gaps between spells of duty of less than 12 hours.

Spokesmen for both the Guild of Air Traffic Controllers and the Civil Aviation Authority said they had never heard of controllers suffering sleep disorders. The spokesman for the CAA said: "We would certainly take it seriously if anyone did have a problem. We have our own medical department which would certainly be able to offer help to someone with a sleep disorder." He said he failed

to see how a controller could fall asleep and not be noticed, because they never worked alone.

The most serious sleep disorder is narcolepsy where the patient is liable to fall asleep unexpectedly at any time. Insomnia caused by stress and depression is a common problem, and sleep apnoea prevents patients breathing normally at night so that they continually wake up and are exhausted the next day.

Professor Douglas said that daytime sleepiness was a huge problem, affecting about one-in-25 middle-aged men and one-in-50 middle-aged women. "There is evidence that one-quarter to one-fifth of all motorway accidents are caused by the driver falling asleep at the wheel ... these accidents have been shown in one study to be the commonest cause of fatalities," he said.

Nurses appoint Saudi lawyer

Ian Burrell

The two nurses facing murder charges in Saudi Arabia have been visited in jail by the British consul and have appointed a Saudi legal expert to represent them at their trial.

Tim Lamb, the consul, spent 15 minutes with each of the women in Dammam central prison, after flying 250 miles from Riyadh, the Saudi capital. Lucille McLauchlan, 31, of Dundee, and Deborah Parry, 41, of the Midlands, both said they were in good health and being treated well by prison officials.

The women are accused of the murder on 11 December of Yvonne Gifford, 55, an Australian nurse who worked with them at Dhahran hospital on the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. Mr Lamb spoke to them individually and was able to take personal messages which have been passed on to their families.

Britain's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Andrew Green, said both women were "naturally anxious" but bearing up quite well "in the circumstances". "They selected a lawyer to rep-



Lucille McLauchlan: charged with murdering colleague

resent them. We are now in touch with that lawyer and we are seeking access for him to go and visit the two prisoners," he told BBC Radio 4's PM programme yesterday.

The ambassador also said he believed they would get a just hearing. "I think we should be careful not to assume that be-

cause the procedures here are completely different, that they are necessarily unjust. I think that would be a mistake to assume that," he said. He added that 30,000 British citizens lived and worked "perfectly happily" in Saudi Arabia, many of them for years. Only "a handful" ever got into trouble, and at present there were just five British citizens being held in jail, including the two nurses.

Officials at the British embassy in Riyadh said the lawyer chosen was highly respected. "He is a local lawyer who is familiar with sharia law and who speaks both English and Arabic. He also has a good working relationship with the authorities," one said.

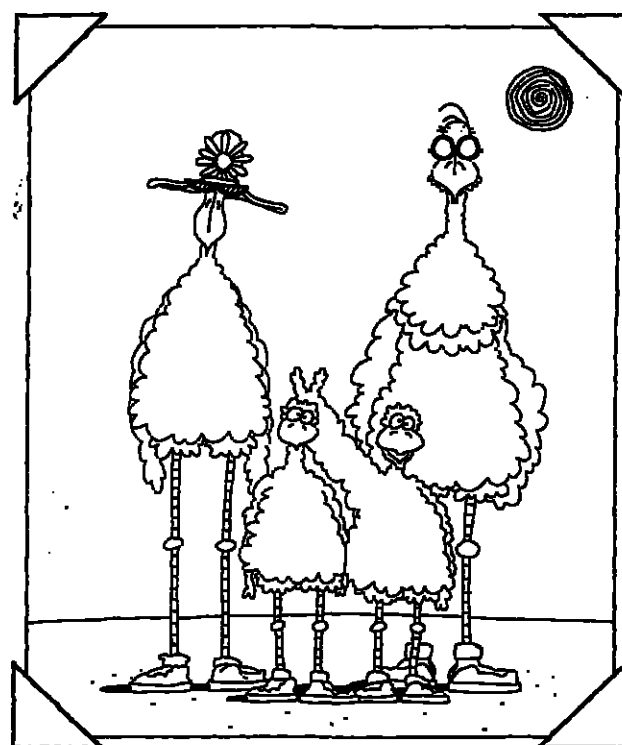
The two nurses had had no contact with the British authorities since they were spoken to briefly on Christmas Eve by diplomats while they were being held at a police station.

With no date set for their trial, the case has already attracted great media attention and the Foreign Office yesterday expressed "concern" over reports in a Saudi newspaper published in London that the Britons had

confessed to the killing. The paper, *Al-Hayat*, alleged that a fingerprint from one of the suspects was found in Ms Gifford's room and that the Australian nurse was battered with a teapot before being stabbed with a kitchen knife. It claimed that almost £2,500 was removed from Ms Gifford's bank account in the three days after her death.

The details have not been carried in Saudi-based Arabic newspapers, and it is not clear whether British authorities will raise concern over prejudice to the trial. A Foreign Office spokesman said: "Whether it is the Saudi press or the UK press, we are always concerned about subjective items or items discussing the case."

He added that assurances of the integrity of the justice system given by the Saudi ambassador in London, Dr Ghazi Algasbi, last weekend were "helpful". "He was obviously seeking to establish that they will have a fair trial, and certainly suggestions of summary executions are irresponsible. No Westerner in recent times has been executed in Saudi Arabia."



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 Offr, Derbyshire Fire Service. Moore, Ray-
 mond, Assistant Chief Fire Offr, Northern Lin-
 coln Fire Brigade. Scammell, Alan Keith, City
 Temporary Chief Fire Offr, South Yorkshire
 Fire Service.

REPORT, VICE ADMMI MICHAEL ANTHONY CLEGG,
LVO.

Col Anthony Leslie, ONS,
R (MBE)
Lt Michael Antony Chase,
Col Donald Anderson, (Retired), Mazonium,
Acting Lt Col Peter Davis, (A7860) Winkles
Combs School Combined Cadet Force, Har-
tford Army, Nourstang, 28339N8 WO Cmsr
J Vernon George, Adjutant Glens Corps

Col Derbyshire Fire Services, Messrs. Roy-
mond, Assistant Chief/Fire Officer Northern In-
land Fire Brigade, Scammon, Alan Keith, City
Temporary Chief Fire Officer, South Yorkshire
Fire Service.

international

significant shorts

North Korea sends mixed signals

A day after apologising for a submarine incursion into South Korea, North Korea said yesterday it was ready to take the first steps towards peace talks and would resume dismantling its nuclear threat.

Yet, in a day of mixed signals, it lashed out at "butchers" in Seoul as the ashes of 24 North Koreans shot after landing in the South from a submarine were handed back across the border. Its praise of the infiltrators as "martyrs" and "heroes" contrasted with its words of contrition on Sunday. *Reuters - Seoul*

China launches Tibet manhunt

China has launched a manhunt across Tibet, tightened airport security and offered a reward of one million yuan (£70,000) for the arrest of culprits who exploded a bomb in Lhasa last week, officials said. The bomb exploded early on Christmas Day outside city government offices in the Tibetan capital. *Reuters - Peking*

India looks to Taj Mahal

India's Supreme Court, cracking down on chemical and carbon fumes threatening the Taj Mahal, ordered almost 300 coal-based industries in its vicinity to close by the end of 1997.

The court, delivering a judgment in a public interest case, also ordered officials to cut off coke and coal supplies to the industries in the area around the monument. *Reuters - New Delhi*

Unpaid wages worry Russia

Unpaid wages and pensions was the number one public concern in Russia this year, displacing the presidential election and the war in Chechnya, according to a year-end poll released yesterday. *AP - Moscow*

New Year's aid to Lima hostages

The Red Cross says it will try to brighten the New Year for the 83 hostages still held by left-wing rebels, in the ambassador's residence in Lima, with deliveries of fresh clothes, shoes, candles, disinfectant and mail from home.

The guerrillas allowed the captives to send mail yesterday and receive it today. It is the third time the rebels have permitted an exchange of mail.

On Sunday, rebels allowed the Red Cross to deliver 40 pounds of imported dog food for two German shepherds belonging to the Japanese Ambassador Morihito Aoki, who is also a hostage. *AP - Lima*

US doctors face drugs ban

Doctors in California and Arizona who prescribe illegal drugs could face criminal charges under a plan approved by President Clinton to counter state laws legalising marijuana.

Voters in those two states approved measures in November that relax restrictions on the medical use of some illegal drugs, such as marijuana. "These two propositions simply do not affect federal law," said Barry McCaffrey, the President's drug-policy chief. *AP - Washington*

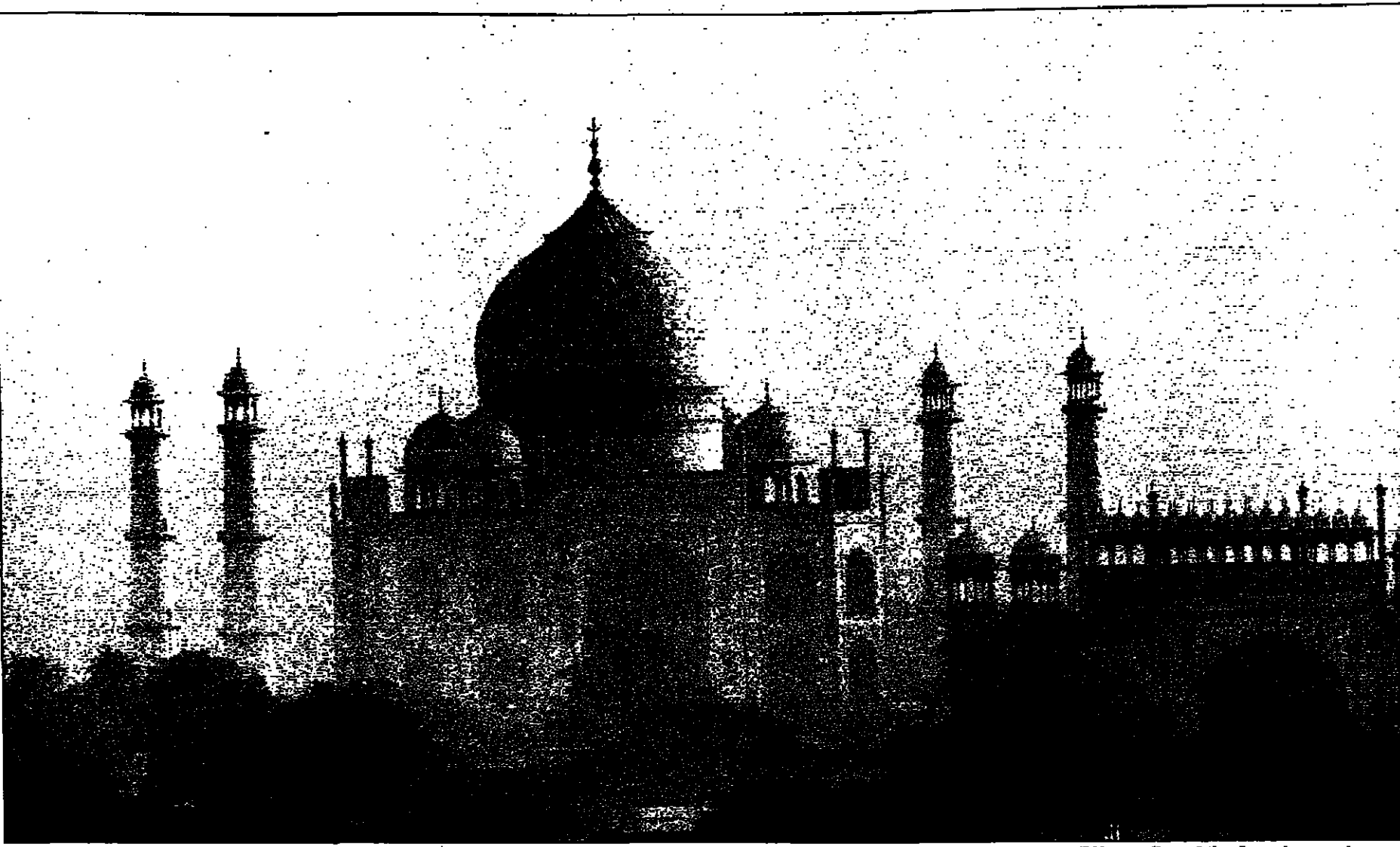
Burglars put to shame

Taipei is to parade convicted burglars through its streets in glass-paneled vans in an attempt to curb the Taiwanese capital's rising crime rate.

"A few countries have burglars' hands chopped off," said the mayor, Chen Shui-bian. "We can't do that, but we can still take some measures to alarm the burglars."

The van will carry a sign saying "The Burglar is Here" together with their names and those of his or her parents. *AP - Taipei*

Industry pays heavy price for damage to Moghul emperor's greatest gift



Smoke signal: India's Supreme Court yesterday ordered hundreds of coal-based industries within the 'Taj Trapezium', the area within a 70km radius of the famed mausoleum, at Agra, to close by the end of 1997, as the monument has already been severely damaged by carbon smoke and sulphur dioxide fumes that causes the rock to decay

Singapore slings democratic ideal

Island's ruling party makes sure of election victory, writes Stephen Vines

With a victory in Thursday's general election already in the bag, it might be thought that Singapore's ruling People's Action Party (PAP), which has ruled the city state since independence, would take a more relaxed approach to the nine-day election campaign.

However relaxing does not come naturally to a party which believes that no sledgehammer is quite big enough to squash a nut, even one so modest as the five under-financed, poorly-organised opposition parties.

Voters have been told that should they dare to vote for any of these parties, they can say goodbye to renovation of

public housing in the areas which elect non-PAP legislators, and yesterday the electorate was given a chilling warning that Singapore could quickly be reduced to the rubble of civil war Beirut if the wrong people were allowed into parliament.

The warning came at a rally addressed by Lee Kuan Yew, the grandfather of Singaporean politics who has stepped down as Prime Minister but casts a mighty shadow over Goh Chok Tong, his presentationally-challenged successor. Mr Lee's son, the deputy prime

minister Lee Hsien Loong, told the rally that incomes had risen by 80 per cent in the last twelve years, giving Singaporeans the sixth-highest living standards in the world. This was achieved, he said "not by sitting back and talking opposition politics".

In the last election the embattled opposition won 39 per cent of the votes but a mere four seats in the 81-seat parliament. This time round it will be even harder for the opposition to win seats. The rules have changed yet again with a redrawing of constituency

boundaries and an expanded system of block voting for mega-constituencies. Nevertheless, the PAP is worried because its share of the popular vote has steadily declined. Opposition candidates have been labelled as liars, cheats, opportunists and practically everything else.

One candidate for the opposition Worker's Party, Tang Liang Hong, has achieved the rare distinction of becoming the single most important election issue. The PAP accuses him of Chinese chauvinism because

of alleged remarks questioning the predominance of English-language educated and Christian cabinet members over Chinese-educated representatives.

The Singapore media has enthusiastically taken up the hue and cry against Mr Tang, covering whole pages with articles about his misdeeds. Newspapers and broadcasters strongly object to suggestions that they are state controlled, but they give every impression of campaigning for the PAP. Nevertheless, election time is

one of the few opportunities the opposition gets to air its opinion. It appears to be hitting some sensitive spots by stressing the need for less authoritarian government, criticising high ministerial salaries and generally urging the government to give its citizens more freedom.

Emphasising the notion of clean government, the PAP candidates are criss-crossing Singapore dressed in squeaky-clean white clothing broken only by the lightning symbol of the PAP, which bares an uncanny resemblance to the symbol used by the old British Union of Fascists.

Alarm bells toll for Milosevic

Mark Heinrich
Reuters

Belgrade — Serbia's pro-democracy movement has planned a New Year's Eve extravaganza of rallies and parties with alarm clocks set to ring at midnight, as if time were running out for President Slobodan Milosevic.

Emboldened by Western solidarity, demonstrators protesting at election fraud hit the streets in the Yugoslav capital Belgrade and other cities and towns yesterday for the 43rd straight day, despite the ban on street marches imposed by the Serbian police after a 24 December riot in Belgrade involving opposition protesters and government loyalists.

The wave of protest is the most sustained popular push for democratisation in 50 years of one-party rule.

Ranks of Zajedno supporters

Thousands of Belgrade university students tried to march across the Sava River bridge yesterday but were blocked by police. Some policemen smiled as students cried "Happy New Year", but stood their ground.

Up to a quarter of a million people have rallied daily in Serbia against Mr Milosevic's annulment of municipal elections last month in 14 towns and cities, including Belgrade, won by the coalition of opposition groups, Zajedno (Together).

The ruling Socialists (SPS) cited "irregularities" in the vote. But Zajedno, supported later by the findings of a special delegation from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), accused the SPS of blatant vote fraud and demanded that its victories be reinstated.

Rankings of Zajedno supporters

have dwindled since sub-zero weather set in a week ago. To keep up enthusiasm Zajedno has organised a costume ball for children, scheduled for today, followed by a procession and a huge party in Republic Square.

A potentially important expression of support for Zajedno arrived in a letter which, though unsigned and unauthenticated, appeared to be from dissident officers of the Yugoslav army. The group warned Mr Milosevic in the letter, read out before 50,000 Zajedno activists in Belgrade on Sunday, that they would refuse to fire on demonstrators.

The letter was addressed to Mr Milosevic, to the army commander General Momcilo Perisic and to pro-democracy university students in Nis, Serbia's second largest city. The message included a warning that the opposition would be

toppled in its turn if it became autocratic in power.

The letter also suggested that any move by Mr Milosevic to declare a state of emergency would either collapse or pit the army against his large security police force. The army helped Mr Milosevic to crush demonstrations in 1991, but has remained neutral during his conflict with Zajedno.

General Perisic pledged during a meeting with the Yugoslav federal president Zoran Lilib yesterday to preserve stability, the official news agency Tanjug said.

Mr Milosevic is now considering how to respond to last week's critical report from the OSCE. The West has warned Mr Milosevic that financial aid for Yugoslavia's wrecked economy will not be forthcoming unless he concedes electoral losses and starts broad democratic reform.

When patriotism is a new shirt

Teresa Poole
Peking

"Let them wear shirts!" The cry has gone up in many of China's beleaguered textile factories. For the world's biggest country is suffering from what must be one of the world's biggest manufacturing gluts. Warehouses across the land are stuffed with men's shirts — 1.5 billion of them.

And that is not all. China's state-owned factories have been busy churning out other unwanted goods. Stockpiles, as 1996 draws to a close, include 20 million unsold bicycles, 10 million watches, and 250,000 motor vehicles.

Ye Zhen, the spokesman for the State Statistical Bureau,

said yesterday that by the end of October the value of goods held in stock by factories was 540 billion yuan (£41bn), of which a hefty one-third was "due to over-production" by enterprises which had turned a blind eye to the fact that their goods were not selling. Many of these state factories seem loath to forget the easy old ways of the former centrally-planned economy, when goods were produced to fill quotas rather than orders.

While the patriotic Chinese man's duty is now clearly to go out and buy a shirt — or three — the government can at least take cheer that it met this year's economic targets with aplomb. Those sceptical of Chinese statistics might wonder how 1996's

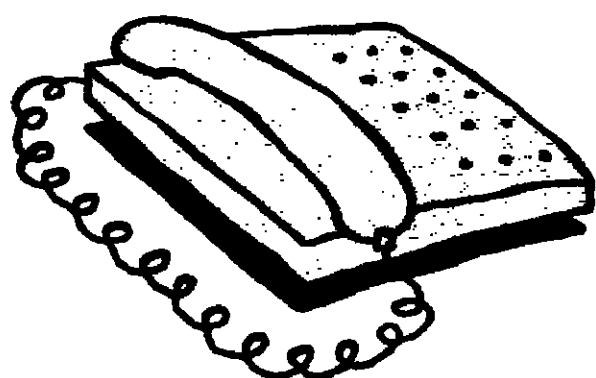
figures can be produced before the year end, but according to Mr Ye, economic growth was 9.7 per cent while annual inflation dropped to just 6 per cent, down from 14.8 per cent in 1995. The economy is forecast to grow by 10.5 per cent in 1997.

Where then does that leave all those shirts? In the warehouse for the time being. The Chinese remain avid shoppers, with retail sales in 1995 showing growth of 13 per cent. But they are also becoming more discerning. Badly designed shirts, even if cheap, stay on the hanger. In this, the bicycle kingdom of the world, the fact that the number of stockpiled bicycles is equivalent to 80 per cent of last year's domestic produc-

tion suggests that the manufacturers have lost touch with the consumer. Good quality brands still sell, but the thrifty Chinese cyclist sees no reason to trade in his bone-shaker until it falls to pieces.

All these state-owned factories survive, because the social cost in terms of lost jobs would make closure unthinkable. Mr Ye said 45 per cent of China's state enterprises are loss-making, and their combined losses have this year (1996) increased by nearly half. They keep afloat on a sea of unpaid bills, the so-called "triangular debt" between Chinese state enterprises — money which they owe each other — now stands at a record 900 billion yuan (£69bn), even bigger than the shirt mountain.

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Check-mates: Two photographers playing chess in St Petersburg, Russia's second largest city, while waiting for potential customers. Temperatures have dipped as low as -30C as Russians prepare for their Christmas and New Year festivities. Photograph: Reuters

Hebron deal stuck on the small print

Eric Silver
Jerusalem

Having failed to meet a Christmas deadline, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were working against the clock last night to seal an Israeli redeployment in Hebron before the new year.

There was more scepticism among observers outside the bargaining chamber than in. Spokesmen for both teams remained confident that an agreement was imminent after late-night talks in Gaza on Sunday between the Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, and the Israeli Defence Minister, Yitzhak Mordechai.

Not for the first time, Mr Mordechai announced afterwards that they had resolved most of the issues still in dispute. The Israeli-born ex-general seems to have established a more affable dialogue with Mr Arafat than the more doctrinaire Prime Minister, Benjamin

Netanyahu, has managed. But in the end it is Mr Netanyahu who will decide.

The Prime Minister assured right-wing and religious coalition MPs yesterday that the eventual Hebron accord would be "better on 10 counts" for the security of the 450 Jewish settlers than that signed by his Labour predecessor, Shimon Peres, at the beginning of the year.

The American mediator, Dennis Ross, who flew back to Israel last night from a break in the United States, was expected to give the talks an extra push. The Palestinians want to invite American and Egyptian representatives to witness an agreement.

Before joining the negotiations in a Jerusalem hotel yesterday, Mr Mordechai told reporters: "I expect an agreement to be concluded and signed within a very short time."

Jibril Rajoub, the Palestini-

ans' West Bank security chief, hoped Mr Arafat and Mr Netanyahu could meet today and sign a deal. Another Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erakat, predicted that Israeli troops would evacuate most of Arab Hebron, the last West Bank town under occupation, within a week of the signing.

The main stumbling block was a last-minute demand by the Palestinian leader to station joint security teams at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, the traditional burial place of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

According to the original Peres-Arafat agreement, Israel was to have exclusive oversight of security at the tomb. Israeli officials yesterday accused Mr Arafat of going back on his word and trying to get more concessions. David Bar-Illan, a senior advisor to Mr Netanyahu, said a summit could take place today if the Palestinians dropped these demands.

Father Frost and the Snow Maiden deliver Russia's winter warmer

MOSCOW DAYS

You think it is cold in western Europe at the moment? Try coming to Russia. In Moscow, the temperature has dropped to -30C—the temperature at which cars seize up, street flower-sellers protect their roses in glass cabinets heated by candles and Russian parents bundle up their children not only in hats and scarves but also in face masks.

The frost has not, however, deterred the crowds from joining the new year shopping rush. Yesterday, Novoslobodskaya market was heaving with people in heavy overcoats and fur hats, struggling to buy timed salmon and mayonnaise for the festive meal, and "yolkas"—fir trees—for the festive mood.

Russian New Year is a curious mixture of domestic traditions and practices adopted from abroad. The atheist Communists stressed it in preference to Christmas and, although the Orthodox Church now has full freedom, New Year remains more popular than Russian Christmas on 6-7 January.

Although Russia is covered with fir trees, the tradition of putting presents under the tree was actually imported from Germany. The Orthodox Church initially disapproved of this foul foreign influence but the Communists put a red star on top of the tree and made it Russia's own.

The presents are delivered by Father Frost, the Russian Santa Claus. Instead of a red-nosed reindeer, he relies on a female helper called Snegurochka or the Snow Maiden.

Her main job is to restrain Father Frost from drinking too much vodka on his rounds, although often the Snow Maiden has to be carried home too.

Those who refuse to believe in Father Frost and the Snow Maiden know that Mum and Dad really got the presents, after fighting to get to the counter at Detsky Mir (Children's World), the big toy shop which glitters inconspicuously next to the forbidding Lubyanka, secret police headquarters. Detsky

New Year is a curious mix of tradition and foreign practice

Mir used to sell cheap Soviet-made toys such as wooden tanks, which foreign tourists adored and Russian children hated. Now the shop is full of imported radio-controlled jeeps and Barbie dolls, paradise for kids but a nightmare for all but the richest parents.

Russians live in flats so there is no nonsense about Father Frost coming down the chimney. The presents miraculously appear under the tree in the evening of 31 December, when families gather to drink out the old year with vodka. Just before

midnight, President Boris Yeltsin appears on television with a short, benevolent speech. Then, after the Kremlin bells have sounded, the new year is drunk in with champagne.

In millions of Russian homes this festive season, children and adults will be opening their presents to find they have received just what they always wanted—a little furry bull. For 1997 is the Year of the Bull, according to the Chinese calendar, which Russians have also incorporated into their celebration.

Peking does not object to the theft of its tradition as most of the toy bulls on sale in Moscow have been imported from China.

Superstitious Russians believe that the nature of the year's animal determines the fate of humans for the next 12 months: 1996 was the Year of the Rat, an anarchic creature, and indeed in the last 12 months Russia has got into a mess, with unpaid taxes, wages and pensions, as politicians were first busy with the presidential elections and then the winner Mr Yeltsin fell ill and needed heart surgery.

By contrast, the bull is a beast that loves order, and politicians are promising that 1997 will be the year that Russia sorts itself out.

Helen Womack



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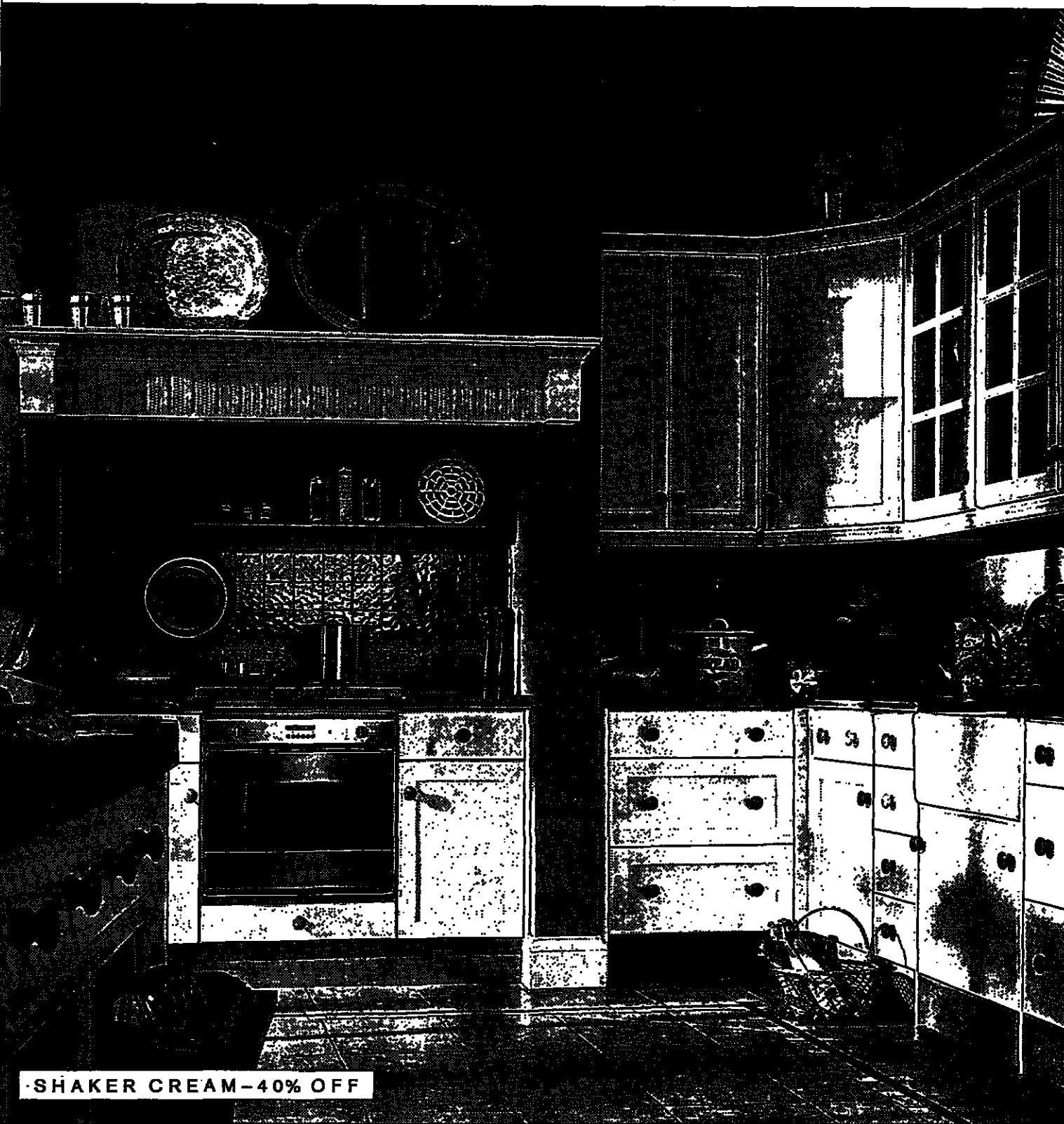
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international

The world was given a break from bloodshed in 1996. It cannot last

Few conflicts have spilled across borders in the past 12 months. Yet the seeds of cataclysm have been sown, says **Christopher Bellamy**

With North Korea's remarkable apology to South Korea over the incursion of one of its submarines into that country's waters, tension in one of the world's most dangerous flashpoints has been reduced, for the moment. Those countries constitute one of two such flashpoints on the Pacific rim, China and Taiwan being the other.

The past year has seen no major conflict between states, and, as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute noted in its latest yearbook, all 30 major conflicts under way, from Afghanistan and Algeria to Tajikistan and Turkey, were primarily internal.

The distinction between inter-state and intra-state war is never simple, however; the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi which devastated Rwanda and threatened to devastate Burundi spilled over into Zaire, for example.

Internal conflicts generate floods of refugees, who spill over international borders, which is why the UN's Chapter

—whether internal or international. So do the non-governmental organisations bringing aid to conflict areas. So do the general staffs of the major military powers, who may have to intervene. So do the media.

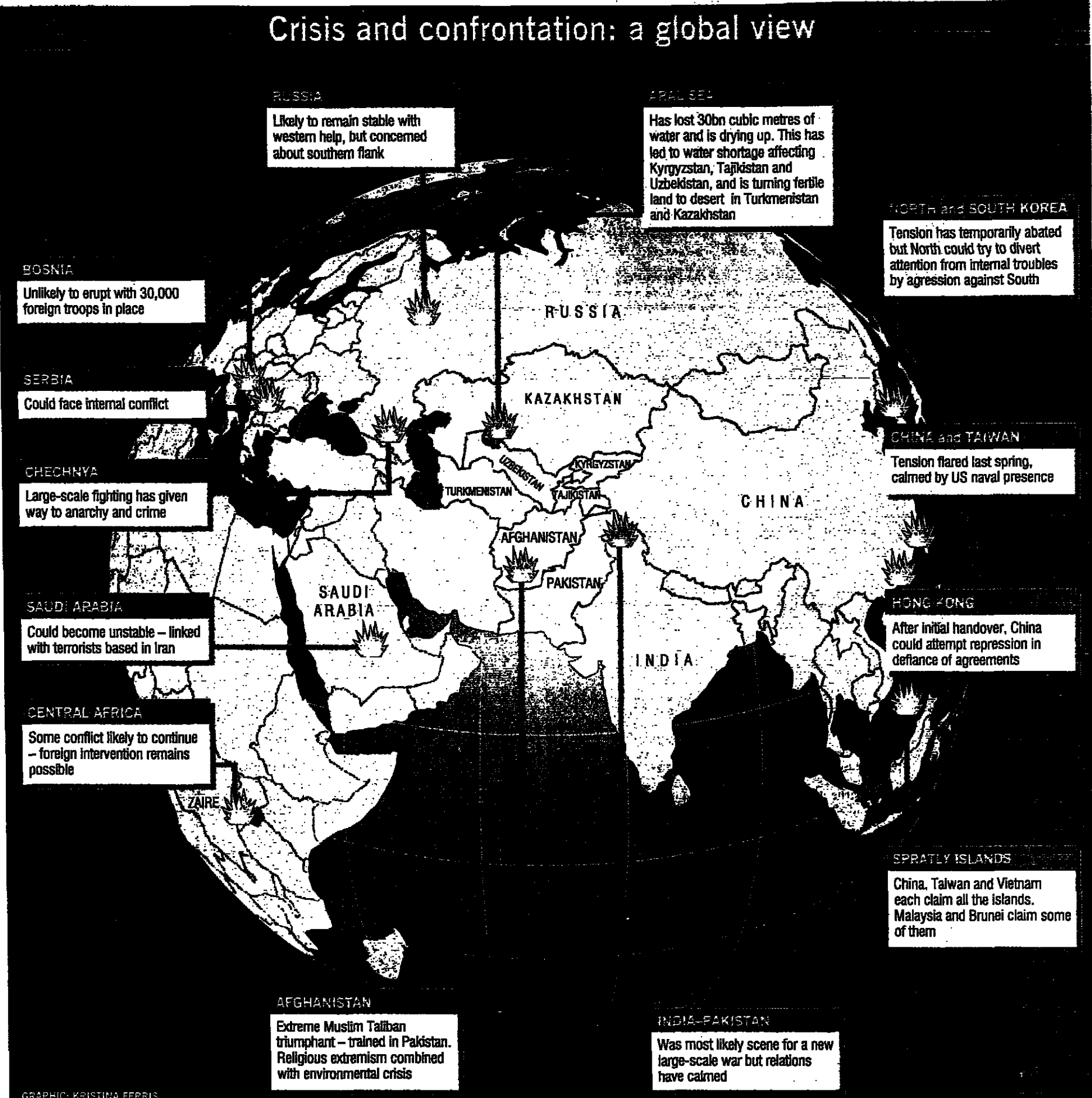
The underlying causes of future conflict tend to preoccupy strategic thinkers more than immediate predictions of where it will be. Sam Huntington, a Harvard professor, recently formulated a theory that there would be a "clash of civilisations". Whereas the great wars of the industrial era had all been within western civilisation, now civilisations would collide like tectonic plates — Islam and Christendom, for example. So far, there has been little evidence of such a collision: the causes of conflicts appear more local and trivial. Experts also agree that other big and inter-related factors — population growth, global warming and increased competition for vital resources, notably water and oil — will influence future conflict.

This is not necessarily an academic *manie de grandiose*. More people will compete for fewer resources in a changed, possibly more hostile environment. Flooded or parched out of their homes, they will need somewhere to go.

Robert Kaplan, writing in 1994, took West Africa as his point of departure for a different analysis of what the world will look like. "Sierra Leone," he wrote, "is a microcosm of what is occurring throughout West Africa and much of the underdeveloped world: the withering away of central government, the rise of tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease, and the growing pervasiveness of war." He describes the young thugs he has encountered as a seething mass of "loose molecules" just waiting to ignite into violence, and a blurring of the distinction between war, which by definition has some political objective, and crime.

The instability and conflict in central Africa — Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi — is likely to continue through the coming year. Uganda, the conduit for arms to Tutsi forces in Rwanda and Zaire, and Tanzania, where thousands of Hutu refugees are still sheltering, could also be drawn in to any conflict.

Western powers — the US, Canada, Britain France and Spain — were poised to send troops in but breathed a sigh of relief when the Hutu refugees in Zaire began



GRAPHIC: KRISTINA FERRIS

'In West Africa there is the withering away of government'

VII, dealing with threats to international peace and security can be invoked to respond to internal unrest.

The world's armed forces are already responding to a shift in emphasis away from international to internal conflict. The British in Ireland, Indian and Pakistani forces in Kashmir, the Israeli army fighting the Palestinian intifada, and even the Russian army, all regard internal extremists as the more immediate threat. But they all have to maintain the ability to fight big wars, the "genie in the bottle", as well. It would be premature to suggest that international conflict has ended.

The past year may prove to be an aberration. And "internal" conflicts can be just as bad, and almost as destabilising as those between states. The conflict in Chechnya, which killed an estimated 50,000 people, is a case in point.

And as Kofi Annan, a former head of United Nations peace-keeping, takes charge as UN Secretary-General, he will want to identify where the next big conflict is likely to be

returning home and Hutu militia headed west, further into Zaire. While holding back from committing ground troops, the Western powers stepped up reconnaissance of the area. British plans for intervention in Zaire had already started life as plans for Burundi. We may yet see intervention in central Africa in 1997, especially if Zaire disintegrates.

Central Africa nearly became the British army's next war in October 1996, when a full brigade of 3,000 troops was put on stand-by. It may still be its next big operation.

Most experts regard east Asia as the driest tinder to be ignited, however. North Korea, facing increasing economic troubles, might try to divert

attention by attacking the south; this year's hand-over of Hong Kong to China might go badly, leading to friction which could explode in violence by 2000; Taiwan may use China's

unlikelihood to erupt in conflict again. Instead, Serbia itself may be the focus of renewed conflict in south-east Europe. In the Taiwan dispute, the US fleet was a powerful instrument in deterring China from further action. There are strong grounds for believing that, like the colonial powers in the 18th and 19th centuries and the Allies in the two world wars, the international community is safer when its military efforts take place at sea.

Naval power could also be crucial in another flashpoint area — the Gulf. While Iraq remains under close scrutiny, and appears to be more compliant after the conclusion of the "oil for food" deal, Saudi Arabia itself is looking increasingly unstable. That is

worrying for the West, still critically dependent on Gulf oil and on Saudi money for billions of pounds' worth of defence exports.

But the Gulf states and Iran enjoy easy access from the sea. That is why the last of the possible areas for major conflict could bring the realisation of the worst possible nightmare. All the factors — religious extremism, environmental degradation, disputes over oil and water, the break-up of old empires — converge in the Caucasus and central Asia and on the border of the old Soviet Union. The position of Grozny at the junction of the key oil pipelines out of central Asia was one reason why the Russians were so determined to keep it.

The other way out is through Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. In this much fought-over area of the world the Aral Sea is drying up, fertile land is turning to desert, oil and water

are resources to be fought over, and religious extremism — exemplified by the success of the Taliban in Afghanistan — is increasingly important. In recent discussions between Nato and the Russians,

the Russians surprised Western observers by asking for help to deal with security threats to the south. The chairman of Nato's Military Committee, Klaus Naumann, said he had discussed co-operating with Russia to preserve security in the area. And when Michael Portillo, Britain's Secretary of State for Defence, visited Moscow in November, one of the Russian admirals in his audience asked for Western financial help.

An explosion in the world's heartland, far from the sea, would be very difficult for the international community to handle. And because it is relatively difficult to get to, it may not attract massive media attention in time to persuade governments to try to stop it.

'Religious extremism in the region is increasing'

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The guns are silent in Bosnia...



Where will the hatred burn next?

Photograph: Damir Jagović / Reuters

THE PHILISTINES WHO THREATEN AYCKBOURN'S THEATRE Page 15

C&G Mortgage Rate Change

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Margaret Herbison

When my parliamentary neighbour Peggy Herbison (she was never Margaret to her family, colleagues, friends and pupils) was a teacher during the Second World War at Allan Glen's School in Glasgow, she had occasion to ask her 13-year-olds: "Put up your hands, those of you who have never been to Edinburgh." Two hands crept up. She had already arranged to take an orphan boy, and invited the pupils who had never been to accompany her. They went for a splendid tea and lovely concert, at her expense.

To this day, one of them, now a pensioner constituent of mine, recalls the altruistic kindness of this diminutive but formidable teacher with that deep, clarion bell-like voice that would quell a rumbustious class, as it was later to quell a rumbustious House of Commons or the rumbustious Labour Party Conference at Brighton in 1957 which Herbison chaired. Offered a place in the House of Lords by Harold Wilson, she declined on the grounds that she could do more good back in Lanarkshire among "my own people" - possibly her favourite phrase. As in all matters, in this Herbison was totally sincere.

Born in the now pink-haired, if modestly extended, miner's house which was her home for over eight decades, she had a happy childhood. "Mother was a McCrorie from Northern Ireland - in fact from Paisley's Bannside. My father, a gentle and tolerant man, was shocked when after visiting cousins there I brought home some Orange songs. But I'd also learnt some Irish rebel songs." She went to Dykehead Public School in Shotts, a few hundred yards down the road.

The strict traditional dominions of Bellshill Academy saw to it that the miner's daughter went to Glasgow University

ty. Telling me in 1994 how pleased she was that another woman, Marion Fraser, wife of the then principal of Glasgow University, had succeeded her as Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland a quarter of a century later, she recollected her university experience. "In those days, the University of Glasgow inculcated into us that they expected us to pay back the country we had had in terms of education to society." It was for service to society that the university was to bestow on Herbison an Honorary Doctorate of Laws, which gave her far more pleasure than senior ministerial office.

During the war she took tough pupils from Maryhill Primary School and later Allan Glen's School on many visits to supplement their understanding of her subjects, history and English. Her pupils recollect with that mixture of affection and awe which betokens a really successful professional teacher her easy authority. One boy, later to achieve fame in the boxing ring, described her in those days as a "right proper bantamweight" - which her parliamentary friends of later years who straddled the parties could easily imagine. In wartime she would take busloads of Glasgow schoolboys for fresh air and to help bring in the harvest at Kintore in the north-east of Scotland.

Herbison had never thought of being a Member of Parliament until the local miners of her father's lodge, without his prompting, asked her to be a candidate. She at first refused, saying sincerely that she preferred going on with her voluntary work for the Labour Party and for the National Council of Labour Colleges. On 17 October 1945 she rose to make her maiden speech:

In my constituency of North Lanark, where I am faced with a gigantic housing problem, we have suffered little or nothing from war damage. During the recess I thought I would try making a survey of our housing conditions. Living in one of the biggest mining villages in the constituency, I knew beforehand that our housing conditions were very bad, but it was not until I made the survey that I found that those conditions were as dreadful as they could possibly be. My people for a long time have been suffering deplorable conditions. That cannot be put on this Labour government; it is the result of governments not tackling this problem as it ought to have been tackled a long time ago. In Shotts, we have people who have been living in a room in somebody else's house for 14 years - living, eating, sleeping, heating and wearing clothes in one room that is not even their own. In many parts of my constituency there are people living in houses in which the Minister of Health or the Minister of Agriculture would not allow cattle to live. They would say, "You must now house your cattle in them; if you do, we won't be willing to accept the milk for the children." Yet, our children and their parents have to live in them.

Herbison's time in Parliament during the Attlee government was devoted to pressing the cause of those who were suffering in rotten conditions. She was rewarded in 1950 with the position of Joint Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. She was able in the short time that remained for the government to carry out her maiden speech suggestion relating to prefabricated houses:

I say to the Government that if prefabricated houses will solve the problem more quickly than get on with prefabricated houses, I say that because I feel that if this Government tackles the problem of housing by giving us in the first place prefabricated houses, those temporary houses will not become permanent but will be replaced when they are no longer of use.

In the turmoil of the Labour Party's 13 years out of office Herbison proved herself on the National Executive of the Par-

ty and in Parliament as a Hugh Gaitskill loyalist. She presided over the infamous 1957 conference at the Brighton Ice Rink - infamous because the ice was not properly insulated and many a delegate had not only cold feet but went home with pneumonia. "You spoke about the cool breezes. I am a Scotswoman and I laugh at cool breezes. I must say to the delegates, though, I am a little afraid that we might have too cool breezes coming from the floor of this conference."

When Labour was returned to power, Herbison was made Minister of Pensions and National Insurance, but outside the Cabinet. She was uneasily responsible to Douglas Houghton, the co-ordinator of the Social Services inside the Cabinet. In proposing the first major measure of the incoming government, the National Insurance Bill, she said that in examining ways of getting help to those who need it in the quickest way possible she had, with very great reluctance, to adopt the traditional method. But she promised provisions for an income guarantee for retired people and widows. Alas, the Government got into great economic difficulty and was unable to meet the promises to which Herbison thought that they were committed.

In July 1957 she resigned, and yet refused to go beyond the formal letter of resignation to Harold Wilson in which he spoke of strong opposition "to the decision taken on family endowment and on certain aspects of the future programme of my department". The truth was that Herbison, while loyally refusing to embarrass other ministers, saw that the fight to save sterling would mean curbs on the Welfare State. Her conscience would not allow her to be the instrument of the new cri-



The miner's daughter: Herbison conversing in Kingshill Colliery No 1, 1950

Photograph: Hulton Getty

sis policies, and without recommitments against other ministers whose consciences could make the adjustment she made an honourable exit from office.

The Labour Party in Scotland was outraged that her place should be taken by the MP for South Lanark, her parliamentary neighbour Mrs Judith Hart, a celebrated left-winger. At the end of her parliamentary career, Herbison served with distinction as chairman of the Select Committee on Overseas Aid.

The dignity of Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly goes back to 1580. Herbison's appearance was the first occasion in its hallowed his-

tory that a woman has represented the sovereign on such a great occasion. As an elder statesman Herbison was well-equipped for the social duties it demanded. The position is ceremonial and symbolic, but it is all the better when it is filled by a person whose public service, character and devotion to the Church enable them to address the Assembly with conviction. I asked Herbison shortly before she died what she thought her greatest political achievement had been. The answer had nothing to do with her long period as a national figure. She wanted to be remembered for the work she had done in bring-

ing new industries into an area to replace the dwindling mining industry. It was partly due to her efforts that there is now a mixture of new industries in the Lanarkshire coal field. Diesel engines (Cummins) in Shotts, toy factories, precision parts for engineering and a great many other factories are a legacy of her work over a quarter of a century. Her last political act was to arrange with her agent, the late Councillor Dick Stewart, famous as Convenor of Strathclyde region, that her beloved North Lanark constituency should have the best potential politician on the Labour Party horizon as her suc-

cessor. They fixed it - the young man's name was John Smith.

Tam Dalyell

Margaret McCrorie Herbison, teacher and politician; born Shotts, Lanarkshire 11 March 1907; MP (Labour) for North Lanark 1945-70; Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office 1950-51; Minister of Pensions and National Insurance 1964-66; Minister of Social Security 1966-67; Chairman of the Select Committee on Overseas Aid 1969-70; Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly to the Church of Scotland 1970-71; died Lanark 29 December 1996.

Mireille

In France, Sunday's television news channels were all devoted to the death of the beloved singer, composer, actress and teacher Mireille, something that has not happened since the deaths of Yves Montand and Léo Ferré. She was the inventor of the modern French popular song, the rejuvenator of the chanson. She was *petite* (4ft 10in), chic and even in old age this nimble nonagenarian seemed unextinguishable. Her passing has been greeted in France as a national disaster.

Mireille (as she was always known) was the daughter of Hendel Hartuch, a Polish furrier, and Mathilde Rubinstein, who was Polish. They were both excellent musicians. They put Mireille to the piano at the age of two. She dreamed of being a great pianist, like her teacher at the Conservatoire, Marguerite Long, but she couldn't reach the pedals and her tiny hands could not span an octave so she turned to the theatre. She was engaged by Firmin Gémier at the Odéon to play *travest-*

ti rôles like Cherubin in Beaumarchais' *Le Mariage de Figaro* and Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, then graduated to *soubrettes* and *marquises*, playing *Isabelle* in *Le Double Inconnu* de Figaro. Her uncle, the actor Charles Kéring, King of *l'Opéra*, and she became a good *châquette* dancer.

But then her whole life changed when Claude Dampin introduced her to Jean Nohain, a young lawyer who between briefs wrote lyrics and stories. He became her accredited *parolier* (lyricist) for the unique new songs she began writing with him - light, witty, tender, with a touch of the bizarre. As Nohain later recalled: "We were young and gay, we composed young, gay chansons just for our own enjoyment, without any hope of commercial success." Indeed their first large work, an American-style operetta, *Fouchetta*, was rejected by all the managements. (It lasted five hours and the score weighed a dozen kilos.)

But Mireille had discovered



Mireille: Indomitable

a fresh vein of humour and melody in her jaunty, impertinent little fables, and they were to transform the history of chanson, still at that time glued in the syrupy though appealing emotion of conventional love lyrics and religious tunes sung (in great stars like Fréhel, Dama and Berthe Sylva, reigning queens of cabaret and music hall).

Mireille's career took another surprising turn when she went to London. Some of her songs were adopted by Layton and Johnson. But it was Noël Coward who noticed her special quality, and engaged her to play the French *soubrette* Crevette in his production of *Bitter Sweet* (misprinted in French guides as "Better Sweet") at the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York.

She made a trip to Hollywood, where she wrote music for a Grace Moore movie, now forgotten, and joined Buster Keaton in one of his acrobatic shorts. She also appeared in *The Trial of Mary Dugan* (1929) with Charles Boyer. While in Hollywood she received a cable demanding her return to Paris, where one of the songs in *Fouchetta* had become a big hit. It was the immortal "*Cochés dans le feu*" ("Cuddling in the Hay"). Mireille recorded it with the original duo Pills et Tabet and Jean Seblon, who then, in 1931, was just starting on an illustrious career as a "Latin Lover"-type chanson singer.

Mireille and Jean Nohain went on to compose, in a great rush of renewed creativity, some of their most enduring numbers, of which "*Le Petit Chérin*" was her own favourite. Others were taken up by Yves Montand ("*Une demoiselle sur une balançoire*"), "Young Lady on a Swing", "*La Carotte*" (in duo with Mireille), Charles Trenet ("*Le Vieux Chêne*"), Georges Brassens ("*Quand le Vicomte*"), also in duo with Mireille), and Jacques Brel ("*Le Petit Chérin*"). Mireille had become a star in her own right, appearing at all the Paris cabarets and music halls. Placed behind her white grand piano (her trademark), she would sing in a puckish manner, the child-like sweetness of her voice with a refreshingly astringent acid lemon-drop tang. She did not have great volume. She would sometimes joke: "I haven't lost my voice - I never had one." But without apparent effort every syllable she uttered could be heard (without a mike) in every corner of the house, where audiences were mesmerised into stillness by her fey apparition. As her friend Sasha Guityr quipped: "Mireille does not labour under the disadvantages of a big voice. You have to pay attention in order to hear her, which on the stage is proof of infinite tact."

In 1937, she had married the fine philosopher and writer Emmanuel Berl, and their love affair lasted 40 years, mainly because they had separate rooms and observed a system of "Stop/Go" red and green lights on the connecting door.

In 1955, her husband and his friends Sasha Guityr, Cocteau and Malraux persuaded Mireille to open her celebrated Petit Conservatoire for the training of young chanson and music artists. It was an immense success, and is still turning out new stars. At first it was broadcast live on radio, then on television. Mireille and her severe authority became the talk of the nation.

She was no dainty Dresden shepherdess, but a tough

trouper in smartly cut blue jeans (that she wore to the end of her life). She owed her young hopefuls: but they adulated as well as feared her. Some of her students are stars today - Françoise Hardy, Julien Clerc, Serge Lama, Sapho and Michel Berger, composer of the rock opera *Starmania*, running permanently in Paris. When Emmanuel died in 1976, she almost gave up. But the lady was indomitable, and she continued teaching as well as returning to the stage. In 1980, she celebrated her 50 years of song (600 numbers) at the SACEM - the French equivalent of our Performing Right Society. I attended the first night of her great recital at the Théâtre National du Palais de Chaillot. She was 88, and I hardly knew what to expect. The lights went down, the stage revolved, bringing on a pink and gold couch on which was perched, with a very straight back, our darling Mireille. She rose, bowed and advanced with sprightly little steps to her white grand piano, on which stood Em-

manuel's silver-framed photograph. She was wearing a superb creation by Christian Lacroix, a voluminous *princesse* gown of tender blue silk with an almost endless train, a huge bow, flying ribbons and nun-like touches of pale azure in the cuffs and embroidered lapels. She had a standing ovation even before she sat down at the piano. It was a magical evening, with the audience singing along - from time to time she would wag an arch little finger at us and gently admonish us for singing too loudly or not observing the correct tempo. It was like a lesson at the Petit Conservatoire, and at the end we were all shouting for more, and in tears as she left the stage after a succession of recalls and encores.

She was *si petite* but *si grande*: *dame!*

James Kirkup

Mireille Hartuch, singer, composer, actress and teacher; born Paris 30 September 1906; married 1937 Emmanuel Berl (died 1976); died Paris 29 December 1996.

Michael Charnley

At the beginning of his career Michael Charnley displayed a talent that heralded a successful future in British ballet, especially towards the lighter, popular end. He choreographed a number of pieces for Ballet Rambert and the Festival Ballet (now the English National Ballet). In 1954 his two-act version of *Alice in Wonderland* for Festival Ballet was broadcast on television by the BBC. He often worked in television, films and musicals. But in the 1960s, his activities dwindled, through ill-health and, reputedly, alcoholism.

The wayward style of his life started early. Growing up in Salford he hated school because he was bullied, while at home he was criticised for lacking seriousness. At 14 he ran away to the Isles of Scilly and became a tea-boy and bottle-washer. This dubious novelty quickly palled and he travelled to London where he found jobs as a theatre call boy and as a bell boy at the Savoy and Waldorf Hotels, from where he would go and see the opera and ballet at Covent Garden.

Charnley's involvement with

theatre found firmer direction when an astrologer predicted he would become a dancer and showed him a photograph of Kurt Jooss's dance company, then based in Dartington, in Devon. Charnley wrote to Jooss and was given a short scholarship. He was then offered free tuition by Ninette de Valois who, after three months, in 1941, invited him to join her company, the Sadler's Wells Ballet. He lasted there nearly a year, but hankering for freer, broader terrain he briefly danced with other companies before

returning to the Ballets Jooss in 1944. Through Jooss he decided to try choreography. He admired the modern dance of Jooss and Martha Graham and tried to expand the narrow confines of ballet. His work had a strong rhythmic sense and a cheeky, down-to-earth quality that was refreshing. After three years he went to the United States where he appeared in Hollywood films, television shows (performing his own choreography) and a musical, *Inside USA*. It also gave him the opportunity to study

with Martha Graham and Hanya Holm. Back in Europe, in 1951 he choreographed three ballets for Ballet Workshop. One, a quartet called *Ballets*, was distinctive for the way the women danced on half point. In 1952 he created *Movimentus* (again for Ballet Workshop). Its idiom mirrored the South American flavour of Michael Hobson's music. Marie Rambert liked it so much she took it into her company's repertoire. The freshness of *Movimentus* also impressed the Festival

Ballet's director, Anton Dolin. Three months later Charnley created the pitiless and exhilarating *Symphony for Fun* for Festival Ballet, which they performed until 1962. He also created his two-act *Alice in Wonderland* for them in 1953 with Belinda Wright as Alice, John Gilpin as the White Rabbit and Dolin as the narrator. During the next years he worked in films, operettas and revues. He directed *For Adults Only* at the Strand Theatre in which one dance number was "*Scènes de Ballet*", a spoof

about the ballerina Moira Shearer and her husband Ludovic Kennedy, who was then standing for Parliament. In 1964 he moved to Australia, again working in television and film. Returning to Britain five years later he dropped largely from view, although he did occasionally teach.

Nadine Meisner

Michael Charnley, dancer and choreographer; born Salford 24 August 1922; married Valentina Belova; died London 19 November 1996.



Charnley: wayward
Photograph: Jennie Walton

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS
BENSON, Edmund John, on 27 December 1996, aged 81 years. Funeral at Service on Friday 3 January 1997, at 11.30, Holy Cross Priory, Lewes Road, Croydon, Surrey, near Heathfield, East Sussex.
CORNFORTH, Katherine. Peacefully, on 26 December, aged 96. Widow of Lawrence, member of the Church of England. Buried at Aldworth Church, Berkshire, on Saturday 4 January at 2pm. Family flowers, donations if desired to St Paul's Girls School Scholarship Fund or SPANA.
DARRIE, Dr Christine Mary, of Cape Town, on 29 December 1996, at her sister's house in Lynton, after a long illness, aged 61. Sister of David and Rachel, aunt of Mark, Ian, Lucy, Jenny and Annie. Private family funeral. Thanking services will be held in London and Cape Town in January on dates to be announced.
For Deaths, MARRIAGES & DEATHS, telephone 0171-253 2811.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will be seen in a Life Guard in Horse Guards, London. The Queen's Colour Guard will be seen in the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.00am. Read by the Grenadier Guards.

Birthdays
Mr Douglas Anthony, former Deputy Prime Minister in Australia, 67; Mr Edward Granville Benn, life president, Benn Bros, 91; Mr Phil Blakeway, rugby player, 46; Sir George Blunden, former deputy Governor, Bank of England, 74; Mr Michael Bonallack, secretary, Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, 62; Sir George Christie, chairman, Glyndebourne Productions Ltd, 62; Mr Stephen Cleobury, organist, Cambridge University, 48; Mr John Denver, folk singer, 53; Mr Marshall Sir Patrick Dunn, 84; Sir Anthony Hopkins, actor, 59; Mr Ben Kingsley, actor, 53; Mr Brian McGrath, rugby player, 37; Mr Eric Mackay, former Editor of the Scotsman, 74; Miss Sarah Miles, actress, 53; Dr Valerie Pearl, former President, New Hall, Cambridge, 70; M Jean-Pierre Rives, rugby captain, 44; Sir Joshua Rowley, 78; former Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk, 76; Sir John Sainsbury, former Clerk of the Parliaments, 62; Mr Alexander Salmon, MP, 42; The Right Rev Timothy Stevens, Bishop of Durham, 50; Miss Donna Summer, singer, 48; Mr Hugh Tomlin, former ambassador to Bahrain, 61; Sir David Walker, chairman, Morgan Stanley Group, 57.

Anniversaries
Births: Jacques Cartier, explorer and navigator, 1494; Charles Edward

Stuart, the Young Pretender, 1720; Charles, Marquess Cornwallis, statesman and soldier, 1738; Sir Edward Augustus Bond, librarian of the British Museum, 1815; Ismail Pasha, Khedive of Egypt, 1830; Henri-Emile Benoît Maistre, painter, 1869; Caradoc Evans, novelist, 1878; Julie Syme (Julius Kerwin Stein), songwriter and composer, 1905. Deaths: Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II, 1705; John Clumsted, first Astronomer Royal, 1719; Sir Frank Robert Benson, actor-manager, 1939; Sir Malcolm Campbell, speedster on land and water, 1948. On this day the Honourable East India Company was chartered by Queen Elizabeth I, 1600; a window was imposed in England, 1686; Ottawa was chosen by Queen Victoria as the capital of Canada, 1857; the Lyceum Theatre's present building opened, 1904; the chimneys of Big Ben were broadcast for the first time, 1923; the British Army abandoned the use of the lance, except for ceremonial use, 1927; the farthing ceased to be legal currency, 1980. Today is Rogation in Scotland and the Feast of St Columba of Iona, St John Francis Regis, St Melanin the Younger and St Silvester I, pope.

Lectures
British Museum: George Hart, "Treasures from the Tomb of Tutankhamun", 1.15pm.

The future as well as the past belongs to God

I have just seen a fearful sight in a supermarket. There was a heavily laden shopping trolley. More and more had been piled on to it until it looked like one of Europe's minor food mountains. Then in trying, rather fast, to negotiate the check-out, it toppled over. Other shoppers were angry and the trolley driver was in tears.

In the run-up to Christmas there is always excitement but also tension. The heavens are full of advertising images, glad tidings of new angles on the present problem. Even the churches are being tempted to compete and to join the deafening chorus marketing Christmas.

The festive season stirs up strong feelings for good or ill. This has always been so. In 1652, Parliament was presented with a "terrible remonstrance against Christmas Day". This persuaded the House of Commons to order the abolition of the festival and to resolve to meet on Christmas Day itself.

But we are allowing ourselves a brief lull to listen to the story of the Virgin Mary, arriving in Bethlehem "great with child". She has, as the poet says, "immensity cloister'd in" - in her dear

Meanings of Christmas

God came as a child, in humility, affirms the Bishop of London, the Right Rev Richard Chartres; and in that humility lies promise for us all.

womb". God comes as a little baby, born of a Virgin who lays him in a manger. God speaks not even in a still, small voice but in the cry of a small child.

God speaks to us from the earth in great humility, as a vulnerable child. Humility can disarm and melt the toughest customer. "The only wisdom we can hope to acquire is the wisdom of humility; humility is endless" (T.S. Eliot). Humility is close to the earth and causes no fear which imprisons the soul.

He could have come as one of those savours on a white horse who promise much but who leave disillusionment in their wake.

The airwaves are full of manifestos and uplifting rhetoric. Hope on Christmas Day comes with a birth in a stable. God's Word is embodied without eloquence or a multitude of words.

The glad tidings are of the birth of a child who invites and draws shepherds and wise men alike to his side. The world is not short of ideas and notions and clever packages addressed to its problems. But the most profound problem is the shortage of the will to change and the love that gives life to others by self-sacrifice.

This love which gives life does not come by exhortation. It is kindled within us as we are drawn into communion with others in the Spirit of God who reaches out to us and draws us to Himself in the Christ Child.

As we kneel simply by the manger, the infant Jesus can touch and inflame that thirst for love and loving which God has implanted in us. The son of God strengthens our capacity to see others as beloved fellow children of God. We

see life through his eyes rather than seeing others as strangers, objects or statistics.

In St Luke's account of the birth, it appears that Jesus was born away from his home town because Roman-occupied Palestine was in the midst of a great statistical survey; a decree having gone out from Caesar Augustus, the regulatory authority of the time, that "all the world should be taxed".

God came small and humble. He came as a child full of promise for the future which God intends. Just as the shepherds that first Christmas were "sore afraid" so today many people are troubled by the fear of what is coming to the world. So much that is familiar seems to be passing away.

No more than anyone else can I see into the future. But I am convinced that the future as well as the past belongs to God and that anyone who contemplates the birth of Jesus Christ and keeps all those things and ponders them in their heart, as Mary did, will know the joy of the angels' song - "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased."

Still on track – or about to shunt into the sidings?

Irvine Welsh's 'Trainspotting' became a literary and box-office phenomenon this year. Boyd Tonkin asks what next for the unpredictable poet of the E generation

ANNUS MIRABILIS

Forget the Holy Grail. An even scarcer prize has eluded most of the British press in the three years since *Trainspotting* thrust its author from Edinburgh's artistic underground into the upper atmosphere of cult celebrity. This is the Article by Irvine Welsh. The story goes that a respected editor thought that he had snared one this summer: a match report from the Euro '96 soccer tournament. Then he learnt that Welsh's conditions included the full payment of bar bills – for him and all his guests. Apocryphal or not, the idea of Scotland's lord of literary misrule playing a canny cat-and-mouse game with the mainstream media that have so clumsily lionised him does ring very true.

This year, Danny Boyle's hyperactive version of *Trainspotting* became the sole British movie to stand up at the box office against Hollywood's dumb-and-dumber blockbusters. The Welsh multimedia enterprise – the book, the play, the film, the poster, the CD – has now produced the cash to match its dash. At the same time, the writer himself shows signs of getting stuck in his own groove.

Some adverse reactions to *Ecstasy*, a triptych of new novellas, hinted that the long delirium induced by his drug-and-dance riffs may have begun to wane, at least in print. Yet, as he cracks out a book a year and ventures out from his canal-side warehouse flat in Amsterdam to Europe's finest raves, Welsh refuses to agonise over his next step. Not least among his breaches of convention is this blithe indifference to the normal pathway of a literary career.

From House to trance, the music that pulsates behind his prose is marked by what the anti-rave clause of the Criminal Justice Act calls "a repetitive series of beats". You might say the same about his work. *Ecstasy*, with its blazing peacocks to the rising generation's shiny, shiny, shiny, and all his favourite music one more time. Macho-violence and self-hatred wrestled with a drug-addicted glimpse of shared childhood bliss and personal deliverance. In a review, the Scottish writer and musician Pat Kane professed himself "still saddened (or at least perplexed) by the proximity of individual sadism and collective joy in Welsh's work". Yet the man himself bothers no more about textbook notions of writerly development than the music he loves does about harmonic progression. The sheer exhilaration of the rush – in Welsh's case, his comic but affecting blend of profane "Embra" street talk and subtle literary English – makes up for a murky sense of direction. How long can the high last, for the author and his legion of fans?

This year's work shows that Welsh still keeps to roughly the same tracks laid down in *Trainspotting*. The drugs may change; the million stays much the same. As well as *Ecstasy*, he contributed to *Children of Albion*, the bestselling anthology of new-wave Scottish authors compiled by his first editor, Kevin Williamson. Early next year, he will publish a story in *Disco Biscuits*, a collection that marks the decade since House beats first arrived on these shores from the clubs of Ibiza. "The State of the Party" scrambles bad trips, rough sex and ultra-violence among the Edinburgh "schemes" into a familiar cocktail. As usual, the wrecked loser at its heart blames his paranoia on "the residue of the acid... just the comedown". Welsh's fiction always hints that an explanation for his characters' misery lies just beyond their chemically modified horizons. The big picture – a radical analysis that takes in masculinity and gender politics, Scottish nationalism, class conflict and eco-



Welsh: cares no more about writerly development than the music he loves does about harmonic progression

nomie change – always hovers just behind their blurry vision. In this new story, one of the bad lads brags about his sexual prowess and crows that "Nae amount ay drugs kin knock this boy out ay his stride. That's whit sorts out the highly-skilled time-served men fae the also-rans". That poignant allusion to "highly-skilled time-served men" gives the speech a true Welsh touch – an echo of the secure industrial jobs that these kids' fathers held down, but that they never will. Yet the burgeoning Welsh cult fostered by the film seems to have stopped this broader view from ever coming into proper focus.

It's possible that Welsh will tire of his own myth and bow out of fiction for a while. With his surprisingly "straight" background in housing management and business studies, and his commit-

ment to the cosmopolitan rave scene, he might even be keeping some great entrepreneurial coup up his sleeve. Irvine Welsh as a supercool equivalent of London clubland baron Peter Stringfellow, for example? Stranger things have happened.

Yet we shouldn't underestimate just what he has achieved in three brief years. After decades of death-of-the-book punditry, the widest postwar youth movement – bigger than the hippies, bigger than punk – found its voice in a writer of startling verbal gifts. A real writer: not a DJ, not a designer, not a singer and definitely not a TV personality. A couple of years ago, it was immensely heartening to see *Trainspotting* stacked up by the till like Mars bars in every sweet shop across lowland Scotland, and selling just as fast. If

today's dance culture really was spiralling down into an abyss of sub-literacy, it would hardly seize on such an artful dodger as its mascot.

In *Marabou Stork Nightmares* – a novel of even more controlled ferocity than *Trainspotting* – the harmed and harmful hero admits that he's spent his life "running away from sensitivity, from feelings, from love. Running away because a fuckin' scheme, a nobody, shouldnae have these feelings because there's fuckin' nae chair for them tae go". For an army of readers with no time or taste for the sacred monuments of modern writing, Welsh has given their joy and fear somewhere positive tae go. The question that 1997 holds is whether Welsh the writer – as opposed to the brand-name and businessman – has anywhere fresh tae go himself.



Phil Hammond MA, MB, BChir, MRCGP, DGM*

Q: Who holds the UK record for impersonating a doctor?
A: Mohammed Saeed of Bradford, who impersonated a GP for 30 years before he was caught – and he was one of the good ones.

Q: What did he allegedly prescribe for a sore throat and conjunctivitis?
A: Crocodile and shitapoo.

Q: What happens to the death rate when junior doctors go on strike?
A: It goes down.

Q: What did Cornish nurse Valerie Robinson do that she shouldn't have?
A: Whip out an appendix.

Q: What did managers at Hartlepool and Peterloo NHS trust do to erode an American anaesthetist to work for them?
A: They paid £1,700 to transport Fritz, his Rotweiler, over with him. Both returned, homesick, after a few months.

Q: Who definitely wasn't Dr Dolittle?
A: Anthony Percy, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon from Sidcup, awarded £525,000 in damages from the *Daily Mirror* which called him Dr Dolittle for not coming into hospital to help his junior staff find an intensive-care bed.

Q: Which cough remedies upset nurses in 1996?
A: Night Nurse and Day Nurse – they appeared in *Chemist and Druggist* under the headline "Nurses hard during the day, soft at bed." The Advertising Standards Authority said it was a harmless play on words.

Q: What is bleep roulette?
A: A game that junior doctors are alleged to play when they're bored. They sit round a table, put all their bleeps in the middle and pick one out at random – so the psychiatrist has to be a surgeon for the evening and vice versa.

Q: Why do doctors grab your bollocks and ask you to cough?
A: Because it's fun. And to see if you've got a hernia.

Q: Who said "Going into the media has been glamorous and stimulating, but it's not as easy as it looks"?
A: GMTV's Dr Hilary Jones.

Q: True or false? In 1996, a GP removed a 75-year-old woman from his list, telling her "I am unable to tolerate the environment in your home".
A: True. Dr Ian Farmer removed a Mrs Pratt because she was allergic to her cigarette smoke.

Q: What percentage of Dutch ear, nose and throat surgeons admit to having had sexual contact with a patient?
A: 10 per cent.

How many doctors wash their thermometers between patients? What is 'bleep roulette'? Why do doctors drink? What is six times more likely to happen in Glasgow? Yes, it's your end-of-year quiz, and no prizes for guessing the answers

Q: Which is safer: a) taking your gall bladder out by hacking a great hole in the abdomen; or b) whipping it out through a tiny keyhole incision?
A: Depends who's doing it. Overall, the big hole is marginally safer.

Q: How many years earlier do the poorest women in the UK die compared with the richest?
A: Seven.

Q: What are you six times more likely to have done in Glasgow than in Dundee?
A: Your womb scraped.

Q: What percentage of operations carried out in the UK are unnecessary?
A: 20 per cent.

Q: What time of the week is your GP most likely to prescribe antibiotics?
A: Friday evening.

Q: True or false? You're more likely to leave hospital with an infection than enter with one.
A: True.

Q: What percentage of doctors wash their thermometers in between patients?
A: 15 per cent. And that goes for oral and rectal (I use the same one).

Q: In 1995, who sewed up a patient in a Bradford casualty department by mistake?
A: A 17-year-old patient.

Q: What percentage of hospital managers would admit the NHS is too big?
A: 35 per cent. And they all say it.

Q: What are the Government's new safe-drinking limits?
A: 28 units a week for men, 21 for women. Doctors prefer 21 and 14.

Q: How many people know what the Government's safe limits are?
A: Fewer than 5 per cent.

Q: How many doctors, according to the BMA, are addicted to alcohol or drugs?
A: 13,000.

Q: Why do doctors drink?
A: To give them something to do while they're smoking. Boom, boom.

Q: How much a year do people who don't turn up to their outpatient appointments cost the NHS?
A: £266 million.

Q: If you're under 60 years old, do you save the NHS money by exercising?
A: No – you cost more because of injuries.

Q: What is the average wait for an emergency bed in London?
A: Seven hours.

Q: What percentage of casualty departments are still putting up patients on trolleys overnight?
A: 50 per cent.

Q: The 1996 'Grand Housekeeping' Woman of the Year is a doctor. What was she before that?
A: A nurse.

Q: Who said 'The doctors and the medical profession are the priesthood and they regard themselves as a priesthood'?
A: Nigel Lawson.

Q: Who made a disastrous party political broadcast about a girl with glue ear whose mother was a Tory candidate?
A: The Labour Party.

Q: Who claimed that the idea for GP fundholding came while he was taking a promenade in Calicut?
A: Kenneth Clarke – and doesn't it show.

Q: Who said 'William – you need a large whisky'?
A: Thatcher to Wakefield, when he became health minister.

Q: How many of the Government's 27 'Health of the Nation' targets were met in 1996?
A: 11.

Q: What were the biggest fly in?
A: Obesity, smoking and alcohol.

Q: Which area in England has most GPs per head?
A: Harrow.

Q: Which has least?
A: Rotherham, Sunderland and Rotherley.

Q: How many GPs would have to move to the North to even up the distribution?
A: 700.

Q: How many of the symptoms a GP sees would get better if left to nature?
A: 80 per cent.

Q: What percentage of NHS staff experienced violence at work last year?
A: 40 per cent.

Q: Who said 'Let me make one thing absolutely clear. The National Health Service is safe with us'?
A: Thatcher.

Q: Who said 'Maybe the Labour Party was selling the truth after all. Perhaps the NHS is unsafe in the Tories' hands'?
A: The Daily Express.

Q: Where is Dr Phil spending New Year's Eve?
A) The casualty department of City Hospital, Birmingham
b) At home with the wife and kids
c) Trafalgar Square
A: See Chapter 4 for details.

* This column was previously labelled 'Phil Hammond M.D.' A solicitor reader points out that Dr Hammond is not, in fact, entitled to attach these letters to his name; these, then, are his real qualifications.

There was a carpet of jonquils as far as you could see

The time: May 1986

The place: the Aubrac, France

The man: John Eliot Gardiner, conductor

revelations



There is an area in France that in the last few years has meant a lot to me, because I never realised such an area could still exist. I thought it would have disappeared centuries ago. It is an area called the Aubrac, a plateau about 3,000ft high, up in the Auvergne, and about the nearest thing to ancient Gaul that I can imagine.

I happened across it in this way: for six years I was music director of the Opéra in Lyon, and in May 1986 I was having dinner with a composer friend called Jean-Guy Bailly and his wife. They rent a gîte in the Aubrac and were enthusing about the region: the landscape, the people, the food. I got so caught up in their enthusiasm, I decided then and there to see it for myself.

I drove southwest towards Le Puy and up into the Auvergne. I'd known other parts of the region before, the Rouergue, the Dordogne and the Gorges du Tarn, but this came as a complete surprise. I arrived at the edge of the Aubrac plateau, found somewhere to stay for the night and apart from the fact that the locals spoke this strange patois, the first thing that struck me was how incredibly untouched it all was by the 20th century. Starting out early next morning, I walked from one end of the plateau to the other. Spring had only just arrived and the jonquils were out every-

where: there was a carpet of these miniature daffodils as far as the eye could see. As I climbed above the treeline, the tundra-like landscape reminded me of the Scottish Highlands – Wester Ross perhaps, or parts of the Yorkshire Moors.

Most striking of all were the cattle grazing everywhere. Aubrac cattle are fawn-coloured, with big black eyes and long lashes, rather like a Jersey, only much chunkier and, with their magnificent horns, much more haughty.

I have always had an enthusiasm and professional involvement in both music and agriculture, particularly agriculture based on bio-dynamic and organic methods, so I instantly sensed a kinship with the area and the farmers' way of looking after their livestock. In the winter months they keep their cattle in byres and feed them on hay, and only hay. After they have calved in the new year, in April comes the *transhumance*, the annual procession from the valley floor on to the open plateau. The cattle's horns are decorated with garlands and tricolours and the cows, with their calves at foot, are guided by drovers, well-wishers and their families.

The Aubrac plateau itself is hilly and very underpopulated – just a few villages, all of granite stone and almost totally unspoilt. From the very first

weekend I spent walking across the plateau. I sensed the eagerness of the place; pre-Roman, almost pre-Napoleonic in feeling and, as I say, almost totally untouched by modern society. I saw only three cars in the whole day, which brought home to me that this is one of the few remaining areas of near-wilderness left in Western Europe in terms of flora, fauna and its whole eco-system.

The food is superb, as you would expect. There is a butcher in Aumont who displays typical Charolais and Aubrac cuts side by side in his shop. The Charolais, which is definitely the most popular imported French breed in Britain and what you are generally offered at most supermarket meat counters, is, in comparison with the Aubrac, usually rather tough and tasteless. A good Aubrac steak, with its more pronounced marbling, is every bit as succulent and tender as an Aberdeen Angus, or any of the other good native British breeds. And of course BSE has never even been heard of in this part of France.

Even before the BSE crisis blew up I was drawn to the idea of importing a select pedigree herd of Aubrac cattle into Britain. They are such magnificent specimens: thrifty, hardy, robust, easy to calve and they produce a superbly flavoured meat under the most natural

conditions imaginable. Apparently I am not the first person to import Aubrac to the UK, but I think I have now, after two selections of breeding stock, become the main importer. It has been fascinating to see how they are beginning to adapt to the lower and wetter conditions of north Dorset, and how they have begun to put on bone as a result of grazing our chalk-down grassland. This was confirmed to me by one of the Aubrac breeders who, at his own expense, came to see for himself how the cattle were acclimatising. Our plan is to keep the females for breeding, to expand the herd and fatten the males. The first batch of these should be fully fit at 18 to 24 months – say, in time for Christmas '98.

I value the link with the Aubrac on so many different levels: aesthetic, historic, practical and human. As a region the Aubrac is bound to change with time, but I like to think that its unique qualities will remain intact for a good while yet, and that a small part of it will also survive and thrive newly transplanted in southern England.

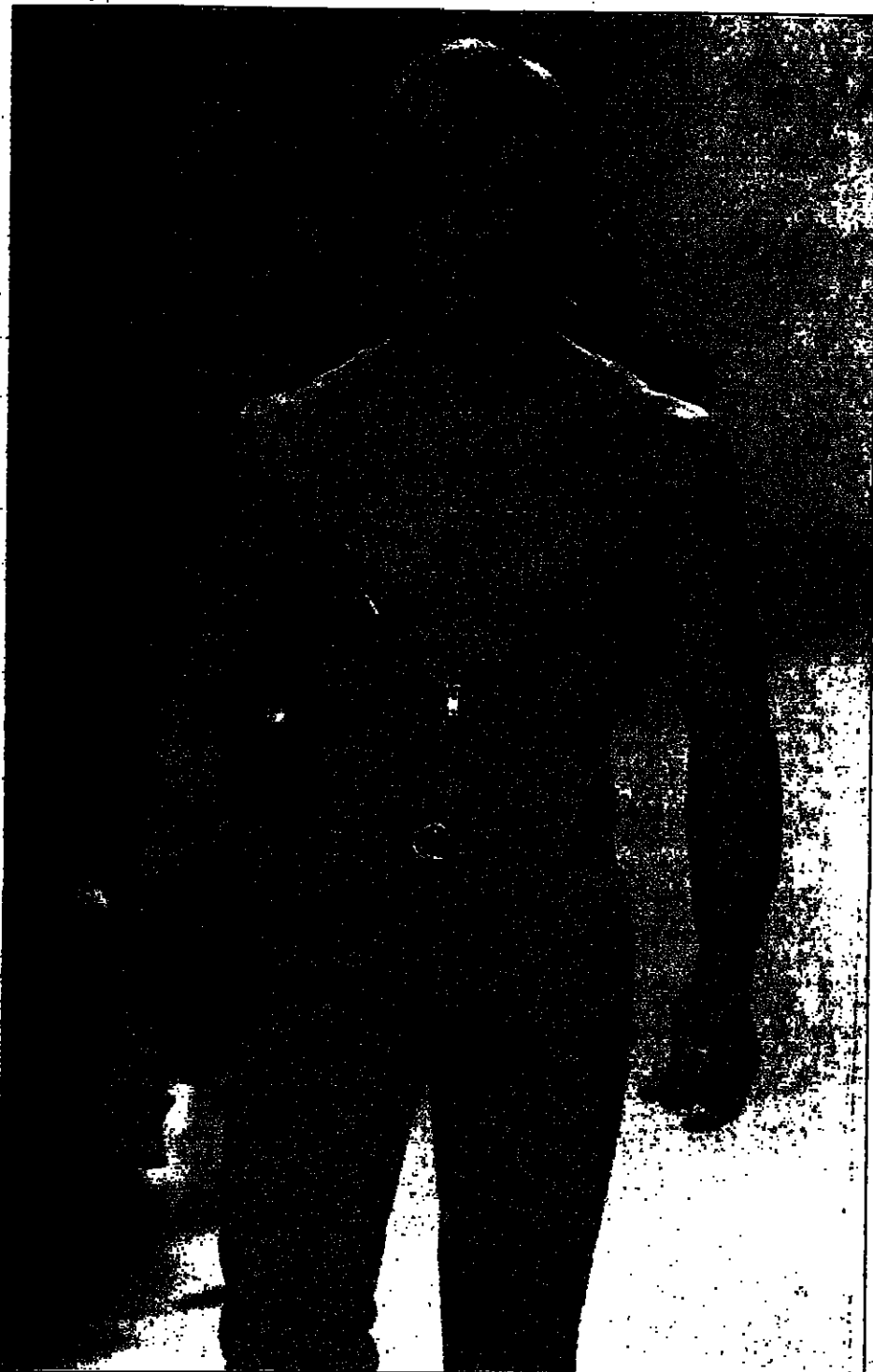
John Eliot Gardiner conducts Massenet's 'Cherubin' at the Royal Opera House, starting on New Year's Day.

Interview by Emma Daly

Duds of '96

If you are feeling a little fat and full of Christmas indulgences, take comfort in the knowledge that even supermodels look grim at times. Fashion designers make mistakes; there is a very fine line between what is ahead of its time and what is simply way off the mark. Here, we show just some of the catwalk looks we *didn't* wear in '96.

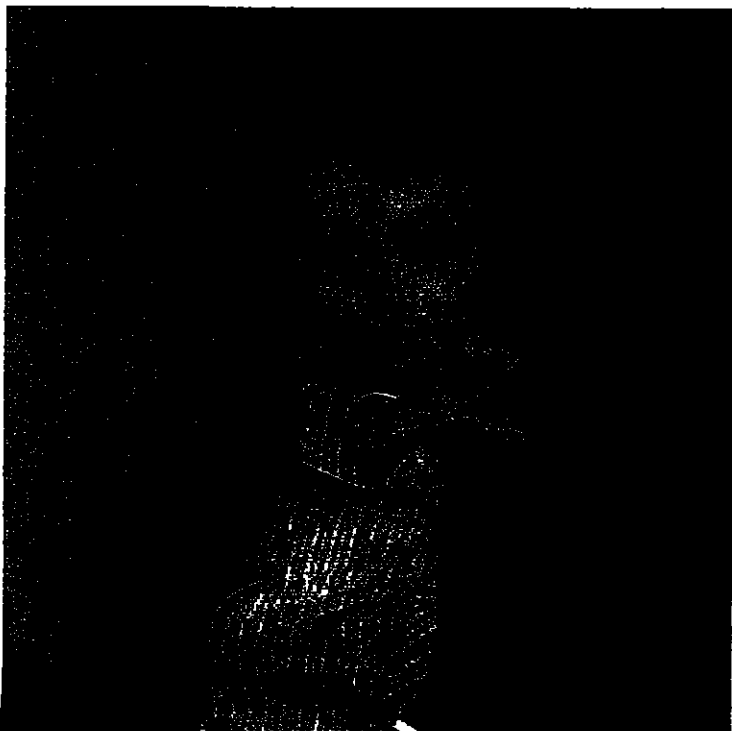
Photographs by Ben Elwes, Peter Macdiarmid and Sheridan Morley



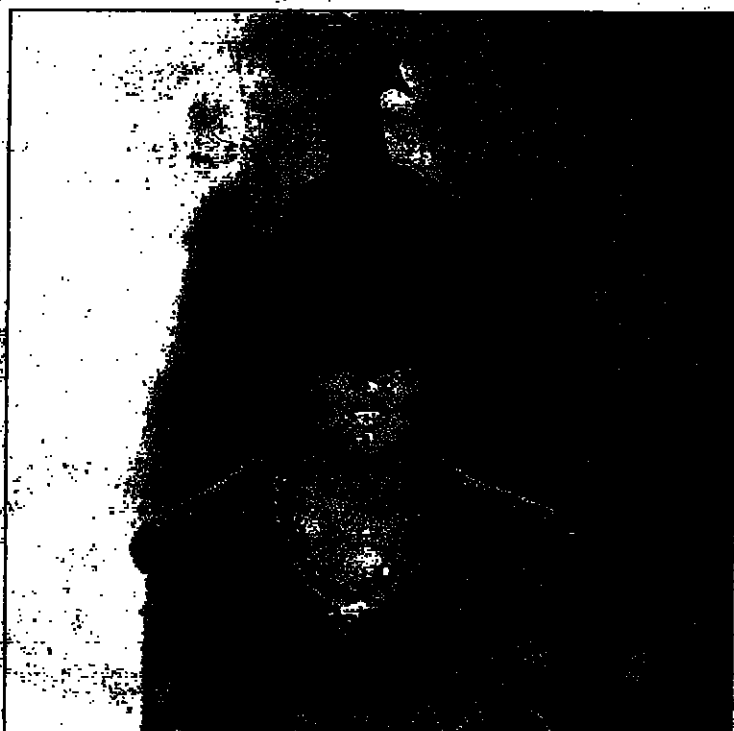
Anna Sui: Did you or any of your friends or loved ones fancy themselves as a Mike Flowers super hero, wax your peccs, smooth off your love handles and pull on a tight-cling body suit last summer? Perhaps. But in baby blue?



Comme des Garçons: Linda Evangelista posed as the Neckless Wonder and wore a candy floss wig in the hope that nobody would recognise her. Hunchbacks were not the erogenous zone of '96, but at least Linda was paid for the privilege of being made to look a clown



Vivienne Westwood: This shirt was actually designed to look as though you got dressed in a hurry and buttoned it up incorrectly. The yellow dickie bow and consumptive make-up are optional



Anna Sui: A bad year all round for Linda Evangelista; the poor thing got out of bed to wear a stuffed peacock on her head



Chanel: How many women did you see on Blackpool Beach in one of these itzy-bitsy bikinis? Why bother wearing it at all?



Issey Miyake: Designers went futuristic with shiny space suits and things to do with tin foil when you're bored



Chloe: Citrus colours, including lime green, orange and acid yellow, were all the rage last summer. But Stepford Wife blouses and sarongettes were never a good look



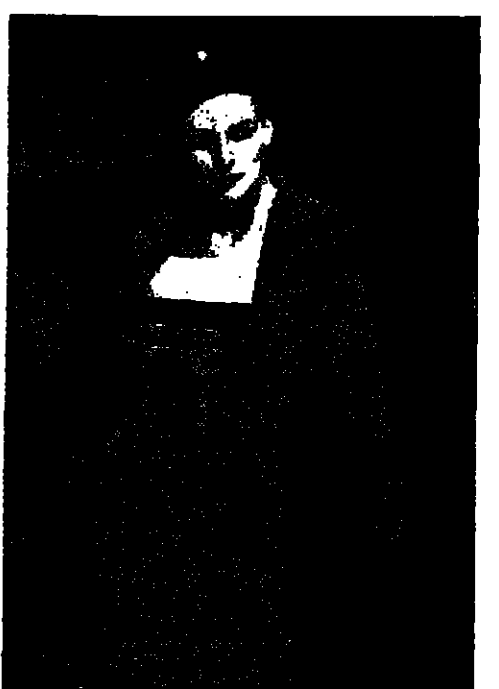
Karl Lagerfeld: Bubble skirts were a mistake in the 80s. Despite this effort by Karl, and thanks to popular demand, they did not make a comeback in '96



Issey Miyake: How to make a skirt out of a bin bag in three easy steps



Todd Oldham: Thrift-store Barbie doll on acid. Certain designers continued to confuse drag-queen glamour with fashion design



Christian Dior: Haute Couture for the severely flat-chested only, unless you wanted to look like Chesty Morgan without the pain of silicone implants

The truth about... hangover cures

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess," warns the Bible. (Ephesians). Not red wine, anyway: it contains a high proportion of congeners, a component of the grape skin, which triggers headaches in some people and is implicated in that most seasonal of ailments - the hangover.

Christmas and New Year is definitely the time for marketing men to plug their hangover remedies, many of which have an impressive brew of ingredients. Among this year's products is a pill which includes, among other things, "high potency anti-oxidants", amino acids, "cleansing herbs" and "specialist nutrients". The makers of a new fizzy lemon drink called Exit, meanwhile, claim it can avoid

hangovers altogether by speeding up the production of enzymes which break down alcohol. Competing in this overcrowded market are more traditional products such as Alka-Seltzer, and the homespun cures which people swear by, such as prairie oyster - raw egg, lemon juice, pepper and spicy sauce. So which, if any, work?

Scientists are still uncertain about the precise causes of a hangover, but the villain of the piece is thought to be acetaldehyde, the substance into which alcohol is converted in the body. Too much of this toxin produces symptoms of nausea, headache, dizziness and the shakes. Excess alcohol also interferes with the process by which the body recycles water from the kidneys, causing dehydration. Complicat-

ing matters are the congeners, which are particularly high in cheap red wine and dark drinks, such as port and sherry.

Sadly, there is no speedy cure for any of these uncomfortable processes and little evidence that anything helps other than water to rehydrate and a couple of paracetamol, which is less likely than aspirin to irritate an already unsettled stomach. Alka-Seltzer and Beethoven Resolve also contain antacids such as sodium bicarbonate, which can be useful to neutralise an upset stomach. Despite claims about the reviving effects of vitamins (especially the B vitamins thiamine and riboflavin) and the antioxidant vitamin C, there is no real evidence that they work, and products claiming to absorb toxins and other poisons are based on the depletion which

occurs in those with long standing alcohol problems, and which are unlikely to develop from an occasional binge. Hair of the dog - a glass of beer, say - may briefly anaesthetise and rehydrate the body but the effects are short-lived. Exit contains fructose, or fruit sugar, which is thought to speed up the rate at which the body metabolises alcohol; but scientists are still not convinced by its claims and say studies quoted by the makers do not stand up to scrutiny.

There are ways to avoid the worst hangover symptoms. Drinking half a pint of milk to delay the body's absorption of alcohol will help. Force yourself to down a pint of water before going to bed is thought to be one of the most effective, anti-hangover measures. And,

because fructose, or fruit sugar, is needed by the body to make nicotinamide, the substance involved in processing alcohol, a high fructose breakfast such as jam or honey on toast will speed things up and will also help preserve the body's glycogen stores.

The rest is common sense: stick to one type of drink and avoid port (especially vintage), sherry and red wine (but not necessarily whisky, which is dark because it has added caramel). Punctuate with non-alcoholic beverages and pace yourself: one drink per hour - a glass of wine, half-pint of beer or measure of spirits - may sound depressingly virtuous but will mean no regrets in the morning.

Cherrill Hicks

the leader page

Why shouldn't we listen to the Germans?

"Helmut says: Vote Labour." If the Conservatives wanted to get really dirty in the run-up to the election campaign, they would already have pasted up a new billboard offensive overnight. "Vote Blair - if you want German tanks on your lawn." Or, under a gallery of European leaders: "They want to tell you how to vote. Tell them where to get off. Vote Conservative." Or even: "If you want a German for a neighbour, vote Labour."

It just goes to show what a big pussy-cat Brian Mawhinney is. Instead of commissioning instant hard-hitting copy from Lord Saatchi, yesterday the Tory chairman was bleating about Labour starting "one of the dirtiest election campaigns this country has seen". Apparently he had seen a party political broadcast, "with big boots stomping all over the country and clenched fists and lies about people's financial situation". We hope he gets over the shock. Because while Dr "Sofie" Mawhinney was reeling, he missed a huge opportunity to take the fight to Labour and exploit the New Year message from Klaus Kinkel, the German foreign minister.

What Dr Kinkel said was: "A general election will be held in Britain no later than May. The country must create clarity about its European policy. Britain is part of Europe. Europe needs Britain." You do not need to be an Enigma cryptographer to crack that one: if you're pro-European, don't vote Tory. Dr Kinkel,

well-known for being unhelpfully blunt, had blurted out what we all know to be true: that most governments in the European Union are praying for the election of a Labour government.

Leave aside the question of whether or not they are right in their desire to see Mr Blair in 10 Downing Street. We suspect they would find the Labour leader a tougher negotiator than they expected, and that this would be good for Europe, because there is much wrong with the EU constitution that they are not forced to face while they have the excuse of John Major's negativism, which acts as a kind of Common European Scapegoat. But by speaking out, Dr Kinkel has been counter-productive.

There is already resentment among British voters, who feel they are being bossed about by "Europe" in general and Germany in particular. At a higher-minded level, there will be a backlash against Dr Kinkel for having breached the convention that governments do not take sides in other countries' elections.

Which raises the question, why shouldn't they? If it is the general view of European governments that it would be in the interests both of British voters and the EU to have a Labour government in Britain, then why should the German foreign minister not say so? After all, Mr Major's administration made it clear recently that Boris Yeltsin would be the "correct" democratic choice for Russians.



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At this point it is customary for us to berate Tory Europhobes for hypocrisy, so let us take a different example. Lord Tebbit and William Cash, who might be expected to protest at Dr Kinkel's presumption, took a spin through the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen during the 1993 Danish referendum on Maastricht. In a bizarre effort to bolster the No vote, they told meetings of bemused Danish students and alternative lifestyles that they had been invited to share their experience of opposing the Treaty. Another relevant example was the occasion when Helmut Schmidt, the German Chancellor, pleaded with the 1974 Labour con-

ference not to back a No vote in the referendum on Britain's EC membership. Part of the reason for the convention of non-interference is a hangover from the Cold War. For years, the United States used its power to bully the peoples of small countries to vote the "right" way - against the communists - while the Soviet Union ran unconvincing elections in its puppet states. But there is a distinction. US interference in Vietnam, Chile and Nicaragua went far beyond expressing an opinion. There are, normally, circumstances where it is legitimate for the citizens of one country to take an interest in an election in another.

Many British voters were outraged at Ronald Reagan's partisanship in favouring Margaret Thatcher over Neil Kinnock in 1987. But if the US administration believed that Labour's non-nuclear defence policy was dangerous for the world, was it not right to say so? If we thought Jean Marie Le Pen were in danger of being elected in France, would we not be right to exhort the French people to pause and consider?

The British general election of 1997 may be a less sharply-defined instance. But this is an important election for the continent of Europe. We are not insulated from the world. We should be aware of our place in it and we should have thought at least fleetingly about how our vote will affect it.

The choice we make will influence the future of the EU - not just our place in it, but the Union itself. Despite Kenneth Clarke's rearguard action, it is now as certain as these things can be that a Tory government would not take Britain into the single European currency. Labour might not join at the launch, due two years from tonight, but would probably try to do so three to five years later.

So it matters to other EU countries who we have as Prime Minister. And there is nothing in principle wrong with their ministers saying so, although in practice it might not, as in this case, be wise. It would be wrong, however, for a government to spend money on a political campaign in another country. That

is why it was wrong for the EU to fund the European Movement, a propagandist pro-EU organisation in Britain, and right for it to stop doing so.

And that is why it is wrong for the Conservative Party to hide the sources of its funding, which means we are unable to know what foreign influences there are on our governing party. Perhaps that explains Dr Mawhinney's squeamish reluctance to make hay with Dr Kinkel's unwise words.

Pop goes the honours system

Lord Lloyd Webber? Sir Paul McCartney? It is, it must be. At last, John Major is revealed as a true subversive. It is all a plot to undermine the honours system by ridicule. So much cleverer than all that Dave Sparrish crudity of simply abolishing the whole obnoxious, class-ridden baubler. That would provoke a huge fuss in the *Mail* and *Express* about recognising the public worth of some old woman who has devoted her life to hospices. This way, the whole Heath Robinson edifice comes down in a gale of derision, and anyone who tries to defend it looks stupid. An OBE for Joan Collins? For services to *The Stud*, or the one in the New York court?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

New theatres needed to fit today's drama

Sir: Julian Mitchell, in deriding the National's preference for American musicals and expressionist revivals, accuses that theatre's directors of avoiding new work because the playwright rather than the director or designer is the focus of attention ("Losing the plot at the National Theatre", 21 December).

The first part of his argument is sustainable by counting performances of new plays against those of the intruders. But has he correctly identified the reason? Can it simply be the taste of Richard Eyre?

It is strange to accuse one who nurtured and directed Charles Wood's magnificent *Tumbledown* (BBC TV, 1986) of prejudice against contemporary playwrights. Perhaps he has a good reason for preferring Broadway hoofers.

Over the long term, the character of any major theatre is inescapably shaped by its architecture. A sensible management, presented with the task of making a given theatre work either for a profit or to justify public subsidy, as many national institutions must today, will do the sort of show that works in that space.

The Olivier is superb for American musicals and Greek tragedy. At other times, in the words of Eyre himself, "it's a hard stage on which to focus attention, hard to animate. Its monumental scale militates against intimacy and its enormous volume gives rise to lamentable acoustics."

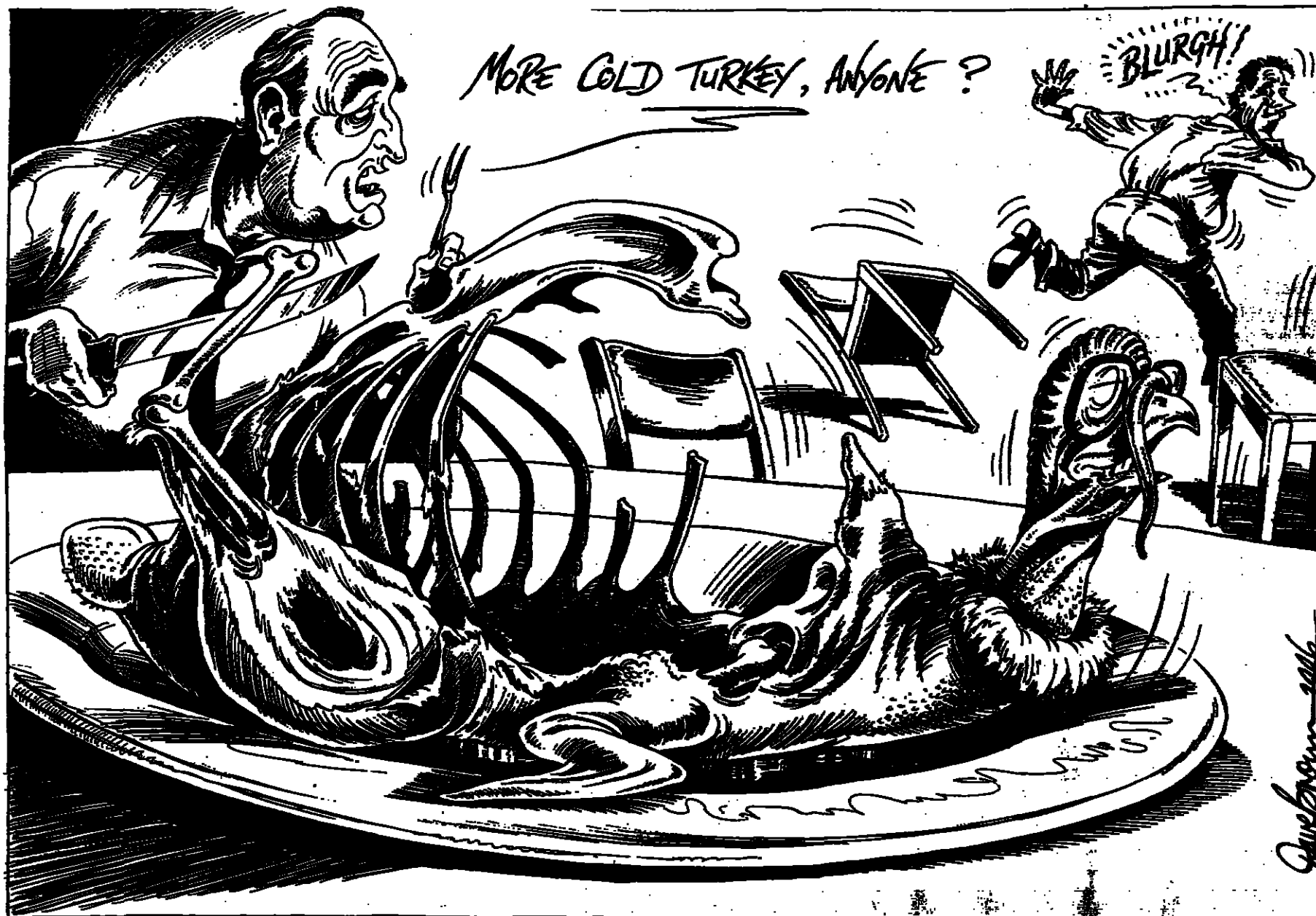
The Lyttelton, a proscenium-arch theatre where everybody can see, hear and enjoy room for the legs, also needs a broad brush from the designer and an attitude from the director to animate the unforgiving concrete. Ask any actor. Thus neither of these are playhouses for contemporary playwrights.

It would be unreasonable simply to blame the architect, who from 1964 to 1966 was answerable to a building committee which included George Devine, Michael Elliott, Bill Gaskill and Michael St Denis as well as directors of the sort stigmatised by Mitchell. Both theatres are the product of theatrical and architectural tastes of the mid-Sixties. This has inevitably led the National away from new plays and even from Shakespeare, except in the grand style, and towards spectacle.

In 1973 Elliott recounted before founding the very different Royal Exchange, Manchester: "And so looking round at the buildings we have already left our great-grandchildren these last years we may well ask what will they say of them and of us. If we are not careful, I think they will stand in the sunlight of other days, shrug tolerantly and say, 'They were good men according to their lights, but the men were dull and the lights dim.'"

Are we doing any better today with the Lottery windfall? On the whole, yes. At the Royal Court, Stephen Daldry, now a greater friend of new writing than Mitchell gives him credit for, was dissuaded from removing the proscenium arch to create a wider canvas for director and designer.

He concluded that the Court was and should remain a writer's theatre, in which the often illogical fabric "gives to new writing the authority of the past" (Gaskill). But grave dangers remain: committees of the good and the great, bemused by fashionable but theatrically inexperienced star architects



designing from the outside in; arts bureaucrats urging ever bigger theatres to satisfy "the business plan" and forgetting that a successful theatre in whatever league is a full theatre and that you do not design a church for Easter Sunday.

If Mitchell's desideratum is to be gained then playwrights are a prerequisite. Last year David Edgar pointed out that most of Britain's playhouses were too big or too small and, preferring the Court, Cottesloe and Young Vic to the monsters of both the South Bank and Barbican, opined that "if every major city in Britain built a flexible 400-seater - and London half a dozen more - the future of classical, contemporary and new-play production would look brighter than it does now."

Should not the priority of the Lottery be a return of the arts to the human scale and hence human values, rather than the building of large spaces where amplification and "production values" (= spectacle) are required to fill a huge house and justify equally large capital expenditure? IAIN MACINTOSH
Theatre Projects Consultants
London NW3

Sign of the times

Sir: I am sorry that Derek Allen (letter, 28 December) is "not ... prepared to go through the inconvenient and slightly tacky process of signing on in person" to collect the various benefits that he obtains from the rest of us who do pay tax. His attitude vindicates the introduction of the Job Seekers Allowance.
WILLIAM WESTLAKE
Bristol

Mystery journey towards Europe

Sir: The process of European integration has been a mystery tour towards an unknown destination ("Europe's where the action is", 19 December; "We didn't vote for a country called Europe", 21 December; letters, 23 December).

This incremental open-ended approach may have been necessary in the early years of the European Community, but now it alarms even devout Europhiles. It has led to the absurd situation where Kenneth Clarke and John Redwood cannot even agree on what the UK signed up to in 1973.

Is it not time, therefore, for Europeans to negotiate and agree on the final constitution of the European Union, the complete list of powers to be handed over to the Union, and how democratic accountability is to be achieved? This is what matters - not the pictures on euro banknotes.
MALCOLM LAURENCE
Richmond, Surrey

Heading for the human zoo

Sir: I am astonished when I hear people discussing what humans will be doing a hundred, two hundred, five hundred years from now ("Computer dilemma as scientist warns of 'unfriendly' machines" 18 December).

Even supposing we survive the

genetically engineered viruses that numerous Ann Shiri Kyo-style terrorist groups will release in the next few decades, a hundred years from now the human species will be irrelevant.

There is a popular view among religious nuts and egomaniacs that "they will never build a machine that is as intelligent or creative as a human being." Get a grip! The human brain is fantastic, but it's still no more than a mass of electrochemical switches.

Researchers in the field of artificial intelligence are rapidly solving the complex connection patterns required for true thought. Within 20 years we will build a device equal to a human brain. The term "artificial intelligence" will be inadequate; we will have created a new life-form.

In partnership with this new being we shall design a superior successor, and at the instant of its birth the human race will become a footnote in history. The new species will evolve again and again, rapidly redesigning and improving itself, leaving us far behind.

Will our masters be unfriendly or dangerous? Possibly. But considering that we could pose absolutely no threat to them (any plot we might dream up for their destruction would be quashed, as they would always be 10 steps ahead of us), I doubt they would bother eradicating our species.

A more likely scenario is that our masters will treat us in the same way as we treat chimpanzees. The future of the human race is already decided; eternity on some earth-

like nature reserve, protected and safe, while another species explores the universe and evolves itself into God.
ANDREW WYATT
Northampton

American lesson on gun control

Sir: As a child growing up in New Jersey, I knew where my father kept his guns: in an open cupboard in our playroom. We had enough sense never to touch them, let alone mess about with them, and they were never missed, but when Kennedy was killed my father got rid of the guns, because it was then understood how easily they could fall into the wrong hands.

This is why guns will be banned in the UK. It seems odd that gun-owners such as R Winnie (letter, 23 December) are so inclined to take this personally. Of course we are all paying a price for the madness of a few, but responsible (former) gun-owners pay willingly.
PEGGY THOMAS
London SE26

Sir: In the third paragraph of his article ("The Lords shoot themselves in the foot", 19 December), Donald Macintyre seems to concede that the Firearms (Amendment) Bill may be too draconian, but goes on to use the Second Reading debate in the Lords as a stick with which to beat the hereditary peerage.

Disregarding two brief

interventions, 35 (not 31) peers spoke, of whom nine (not two) were crossbenchers. Mr Macintyre employs the legitimate tactic of highly selective quotations in support of his argument, so perhaps I may counter with some selective (but accurate) statistics.

Of those who spoke, 25 per cent of the Liberal Democrat peers, 50 per cent of the Labour ones, 75 per cent of the Conservatives and 100 per cent of the crossbenchers thought the Bill went too far. Judging by the most recent opinion polls, most of those who have thought the matter through now feel the same way.
LORD MONSON
House of Lords
London SW1

Starvation diet

Sir: You say in your editorial ("Beware of the anti-hunting roundheads in full cry", 24 December) that "killing for food" is "essential and we shouldn't be squeamish" about it.

Killing for food is an absolutely inessential and clinically malevolent activity. The consumption of dead animals is a highly inefficient way of feeding ourselves. Just ask the many millions who are malnourished and starving, partly due to (predominantly Western) meat-eating, which ties up land that could otherwise be used for the production of crops.

But no, perhaps I should take your own advice and stop being squeamish about a few million destitute (and dead) foreigners. After all, meat-eaters' bloody appetites simply must be satiated.
CHINTAN NANAVATI
Stafford

The strain of late trains

Sir: It is not just the rail inquiries services that are off the rails (report, 24 December), but the reliability of the services themselves.

Recently, I have made six journeys between Oxford and Nottingham, and two between Oxford and Great Malvern. On only one of these eight occasions has the train been on time. All the others were late, mostly far in excess of an hour per journey.

On one occasion, I was advised to ignore two earlier services to avoid waits for connections, only for the suggested service to be cancelled - with a lengthy delay, no remaining connection, and taxis for eight from Coventry to Oxford. A two-and-a-half-hour journey became more than six hours.

My "Customer Charter" claim resulted in an insulting £5 travel voucher from Central Trains, and a nonsensical apology from the manager, promising that my letter would be studied.

Compensation is not offered if trains are less than an hour late, according to government guidelines. That's all right, is it?
ROGER COWELL
Witney, Oxfordshire

Help children to handle grammar

Sir: It was worrying to read Ann Barnes, general secretary of the National Association for the Teaching of English, claim that children cannot distinguish between the three spellings "their", "there" and "they're" if they see them written down together on the blackboard ("Teachers mark down grammar questions", 24 December).

In my experience as a primary teacher, children learning about spelling (and indeed any aspect of how to write their language) benefit from full access to information about it.

In this case that would include the opportunity to compare and contrast different spellings, as well as knowledge about the grammatical functions of the three forms.

Ms Barnes appears to recommend that we deny children access to knowledge because they might not be able to cope with it. This is the sort of patronising orthodoxy which has bedevilled the teaching of English over the past 20 years, and which one might have hoped a national association for teaching the subject would campaign to stamp out.

SUE PALMER
Truro, Cornwall

Volunteer snub

Sir: I am amazed that the homeless charities have the arrogance to question the motives of volunteers who help during the Christmas period and then, in the next breath, have the effrontery to seek volunteers for next Christmas ("Help wanted: Mother Teresa need not apply", 23 December).

Presumably applicants may then be approved only if they can satisfy the charities' examining body as to the "propriety" of their motives.

Giving up your time for the homeless - for whatever reason - is surely a greater sacrifice than lobbying over a few quid from the relative comfort of a warm, welcoming home.
P E BIRCH
Harlow, Essex

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number.
Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk.
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Inequality can seriously damage your health

by Harvey Cole

At a certain stage of economic development, health and mortality are increasingly influenced by changes in the relative position of groups in society

Being poor in a rich country is far worse for your health than being poor in a poor nation. So stated a leading article in *The Independent* a month ago. But is it correct? Since 1910 there have only been two decades when the civilian expectation of life in Britain rose by more than 2.8 years: 1911-21, when it went up 6.5 years and includes the First World War, and 1940-51, spanning the Second World War, when the improvement was greater, at 6.8 years. This is particularly striking as it was achieved in spite of more than 100,000 men, women and children being killed by bombing.

Questions about income distribution and poverty in developed countries are raised in the recent book by Richard Wilkinson, a senior research fellow at the University of Sussex. It is called *Unhealthy Societies*, and much of what he says demands attention from politicians.

The fact that health improved between 1940 and 1945 is widely known. But to attribute this to the better average levels of nutrition brought about by food rationing is simplistic. Standards rose by far more than can be accounted for by this factor. Besides, it can hardly be argued that the quality of housing and the level of medical care – other important ingredients of health – improved significantly during the war.

On the other hand, the sense of shared purpose and the compression of the spread between high and low wages as unemployment was virtually eliminated sharply reduced inequality and generated a high degree of social cohesion. This was reflected in a narrowing of the differential in death rates between social classes. All improved, but until 1951 the improvement was greater at the lower end.

Since 1951, income differences have widened – slowly at first and then very rapidly during the Seventies and Eighties. Occupational death rates in successive censuses have precisely mirrored the growing gap. While overall mortality has continued to decline, something happened to slow down the rate of improvement after 1979. The most likely culprit is the rapid inequality of incomes since then.

The evidence from Britain is reinforced by studies in other countries. In 1980, death rates for white American males varied from about 40 per 10,000 person years for those with incomes over \$32,500 to more than 80 where income was less than \$7,500.

Even more striking is the evidence that changes in income distribution are reflected in health and mortality. In 1970, death rates in Japan were closely similar to those in Britain, and the variation in incomes was also comparable. By 1990, Japan had the highest life expectancy in the world and the narrowest income differentials.

Another country with low mortality and a high degree of income equality is Sweden. This is a particularly interesting example because of the sharp differences between Sweden and Japan in other respects. Sweden has one of the highest income tax rates, whereas Japan's is one of the lowest. While the Japanese have a very low divorce rate and the standard nuclear family remains the norm, half of all Swedes are born outside wedlock and divorce rates are high. Nevertheless, the link between health and equality is strong enough to survive, and Sweden's mortality rates are better than ours for every social class – a margin of 20 per cent

at the top, widening to 150 per cent for 1225s.

It is often suggested that the economic success of the so-called Asian tigers – the emerging countries of Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Korea and Thailand – is due to enterprise, hard work and self-reliance rather than state-financed welfare services. This is to overlook an important feature which they all have in common: since 1960, the degree of variation in income levels has been sharply reduced, and this increasing equality has helped to fuel economic growth.

Once societies have reached a certain level of economic development – around an average income of \$3,000 per head – health and mortality tend to be increasingly influenced by changes in the relative position of groups within them. Thus, one study showed that even when the real value of the incomes of the poorest 20 per cent were maintained, and those right at the top received more money, infant mortality rates started to rise.

Why this should be clearly connected with how "comfortable" a society is with itself. Social cohesion and equal distribution of incomes are not the same thing, but are clearly related.

Wilkinson says that one good guide to a society is how people drive. Increasingly aggressive behaviour on the roads marks the UK today, with the emergence of road rage and even the beginnings of a contribution to the figures for premature mortality.

An increasingly anxious society will tend to damage its health more by drinking, smoking and taking drugs. Studies also indicate that accidents become more frequent and depression more widespread. None of this is good for health – individual or national.

Crime, particularly violent crime, is likely to increase in such conditions, and much of an apparently rising real income has to be devoted to "defensive expenditure" – burglar alarms, security guards, prisons and police, while thieves keep the locksmiths in business.

All this poses a challenge to politicians. It should like to tempt it like this:

We cannot say for certain that Wilkinson is right, although there is a multitude of studies that suggest he may be. There is always a temptation to find reasons for disagreeing with unpalatable conclusions: all sorts of peculiar arguments are being put forward to discredit the idea of global warming, and the chairman of the giant tobacco company BAT still refuses to acknowledge that there could be a link between smoking and lung cancer.

But let us suppose that there is a link, even a weak one, between widening income differentials and rising relative death rates among those lower down the scale. Let MPs make that assumption, and think seriously about the implications. The Christmas recess is an appropriate time for such an exercise. Then I invite them to say how this might change their own approach to political and economic problems. It is a question which deserves serious consideration and a considered answer rather than a few anodyne words or some pre-packaged shorthand phrases from party headquarters.

I look forward to receiving 650 well-considered replies, and to analysing and reporting on them.

The writer is Deputy Leader of Hampshire County Council.

Why Ayckbourn will fight on for his theatre

by Jack O'Sullivan

Britain appreciates Alan Ayckbourn's contribution to the theatre: our most prolific and successful playwright is knighted in today's New Year's honours. But the big question is: will his beloved Scarborough also acknowledge the achievements of its adoptive son? In plain practical terms, will the local council subsidise Ayckbourn's acclaimed theatre properly, or spend the money instead on 22 public lavatories?

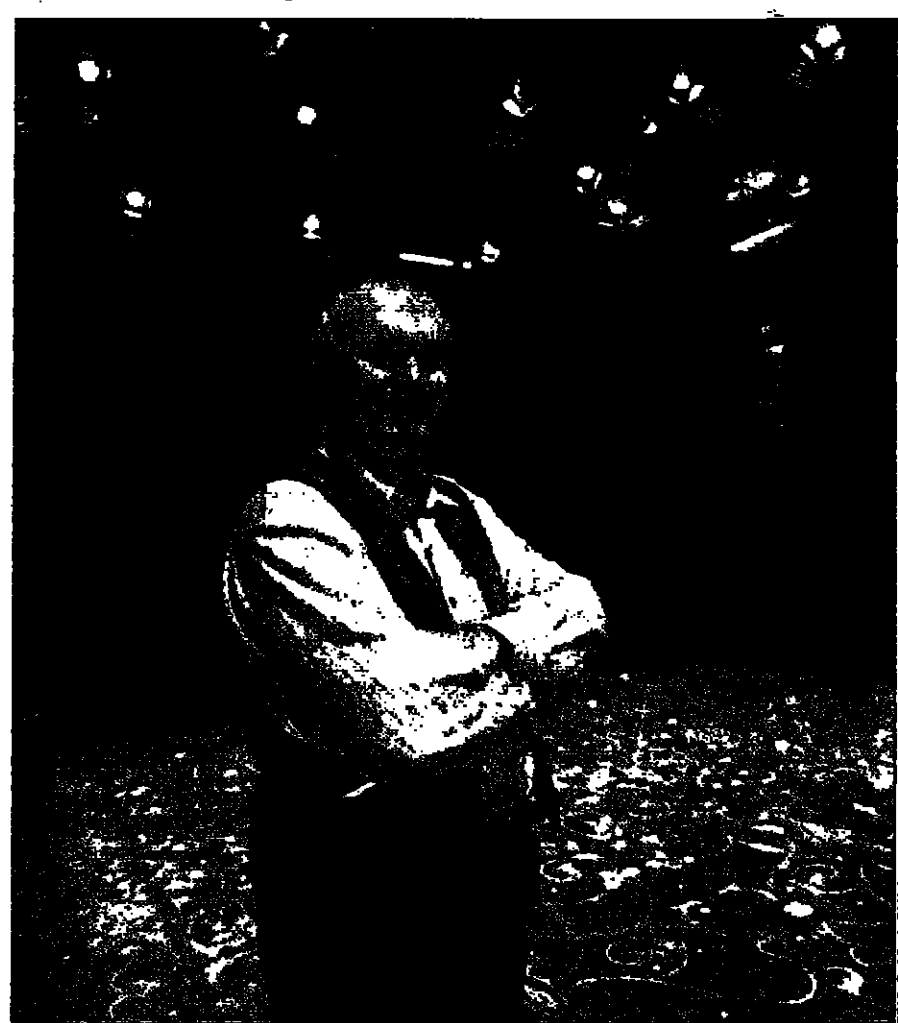
For while Lord Lloyd Webber, Ayckbourn's fellow thespian also honoured this morning, is awash in money, art and ex-wives, the muse of Middle England has more modest aims. He is fighting to keep afloat Scarborough's newly built Stephen Joseph theatre, thereby acting as a standard-bearer nationally for those campaigning to protect the excellence of regional theatre. And there is a real lavatorial problem. The cash-strapped Scarborough Council will decide next Monday where best to spend its pennies.

The precarious state of the theatre venture was underlined in the summer, when the theatre's board decided that they would close by October without more grant funding. Ayckbourn found himself with new premises he could not afford to keep open. Eventually, a bit of creative accounting brought in some lottery money, normally earmarked for building, to be used for running costs. The crisis was temporarily averted.

Now he is arguing with Scarborough Council and North Yorkshire County Council over whether they will give an extra £50,000 next year – in recognition of higher running costs in the new theatre building – on top of the £211,500 they granted last year. Closure, says Ayckbourn, is not a danger in the short term, but he sees the current row as the ghost of Christmas yet to come.

You would think that Ayckbourn's case was proven. His devotion to Scarborough is doing for the town what David Hockney has done for Saltaire, or McCartney for Liverpool (also honoured today). All his plays are premiered here (he adds at least one to his repertoire of 51 every year). They invariably go on, like *By Jeeves* at the moment, to big hits in London's West End.

The £5.2m premises, opened in April, are much admired. There are two theatres, a cinema, an education centre for children, bars and restaurants. Productions have been critically well-received, attendances have doubled. Alan Ayckbourn has at last given this decaying seaside resort, known to the Victorians as "the Queen of the Watering Places", a fresh option beyond bravely sporting



"They'll finish up with a town where you can only buy shoes and get drunk. They're preparing for a living hell"

a "Kiss-me-quick" hat through inexorable decline.

But Ayckbourn, whose plays specialise in the G&T drinking, angst-ridden southern bourgeoisie, did not reckon on some of the vociferous philistines he would encounter further north. They have been feverishly filling the letters' page of the *Scarborough Evening News* with accusations that Ayckbourn has saddled them with a white elephant, a venue funded by ordinary people for the elite. There have been angry mutterings that the playwright is enjoying public subsidy for private profit.

Their campaign has finally brought an exasperated riposte from Ayckbourn, who is notoriously shy. Indeed, the row is reminiscent of an early Ayckbourn play, *Season's Greetings*, featuring Uncle Bernard, who performs a puppet show for the children every Christmas. Just as regularly, Uncle Harvey knocks it over and calls it rubbish. "You really are a negative man, Harvey," says Bernard. "I've told the people writing those letters, 'Sir Alan said yesterday, 'that if they don't want this theatre, they'll finish up with a town where you can only buy shoes and get drunk. They are preparing the town for a living hell. I like to shop and drink as much as the next man, but when you sober up in your new shoes, you feel there must be something more to life."

"I'm the last dramatist in the world who could ever be called elitist. Rather, I've been attacked for writing plays for the mass public. More people now come to the new theatre in Scarborough than before. Indeed, more come than watch football or go to bingo: if numbers are your measure, then football and bingo are elitist in comparison."

The accusations of personal profit carry a particular sting. "Would that it were the case," he says of a venture in which he

has already plunged £400,000 of his own money and from which he doesn't even draw a salary. A teenager can get a seat any night of the week for £3.50 and the top-priced seat on Saturday nights is £10.50. Tickets at London's Lyric theatre for his *By Jeeves* exceed £30.

Reviewing the criticisms, he says: "I'd love to say the problem is only with a few people in Scarborough. But all this reflects general British attitudes to art, which is almost a dirty word."

"For many people, art equals lavvie, equals self-indulgence. This British ambivalence about art goes back centuries. I blame

Oliver Cromwell, who closed all the theatres for a long time. We have felt guilty ever since. We think that art is a luxury, but it's a necessity. You can't trade building a road against building a hospital if it means you can't reach the hospital. Everything is interlinked. Likewise one councillor said to me: 'What's the point in spending money in schools educating our children for the arts, if, when they leave school, there is nowhere to enjoy the arts?'

"We want to improve our town. Something has to be done, not just to attract the holiday-makers, but for the spiritual health of the place. I could have left here years ago. I have nothing that keeps me here except loyalty. I could go to a dozen places and say how about trying out this new play and they would be happy to do so. But I'm staying."

He sees his theatre as a vital nursery for new talent (half a dozen new playwrights are on his books). "I'm known as one of the most commercial playwrights of the 20th century, but every one of my plays started out in a publicly subsidised theatre. The private sector does very little to develop new scripts."

Would he, then, after 40 years, shake the Scarborough dust from his feet if his beloved theatre closed?

"It's a scenario I don't dare to think about. I'm getting on. I'd continue to write and do my own plays. But I'm very hopeful. It's no coincidence that, just when the newspaper letter-writers are running down the theatre, the papers are also printing all sorts of plans – to refurbish the open air theatre, develop the harbour, do something with the disused open air swimming pool. We have suddenly made lots of things seem possible. People are saying: 'They did it, why can't we?' An attitude of mind is being challenged which is summed up by a man who said: 'If you're so good, what are you doing around here?' We still don't expect to have the best. But I believe that we are one of the best theatres in the country and the publicity it is receiving is worth millions to the town. It deserves the subsidy."

But what about the public lavatories? I asked. Should Scarborough sacrifice 22 loos for the literati?

"We have a couple of dozen toilets in the theatre," came the reply. "People are very welcome to use them – they're on the ground floor, just past the box office," said the man bound for Buckingham Palace.

Spicing up the mating game

David Vigar listens closely to the Spice Girls' lyrics and finds them peppered with home truths

So the Spice Girls and the chattering classes have returned to their respective worlds, a bit like a barmaid and a baronet after a quick snog at a Christmas Party. However, as one of the millions who now proudly possess the Spice Girls' debut album, *Spice*, I am left with a strange feeling that something has been missed. Unbelievable though it may seem in SW1, the real significance of the Spice Girls may not lie in their words about John Major and Tony Blair, but in the words of their songs.

What is going to have the more lasting impact on the world – the unexceptional observation that John Major is a "boring pillock", or the messages beamed minute by minute into the ears of impressionable young people via phalanxes of turntables, personal stereos and CD players in every British disco, high street and poster-clad bedroom?

But hold on, I hear you cry, aren't the Spice Girls' songs full of trite throwaway McLyrics, "Gimme all your love tonight baby" and so forth? Well, they're not Shakespeare – or even Shakespeare's Sister – but they are using the English language in their own way to make their own distinctive points. So what, for example, do we make of this, from "Wannabe"?

If you wanna be my lover you gotta get with my friends

Make it last forever friendship never ends If you wanna be my lover you have got to give

Taking is too easy but that's the way it is

It's not what first singles used to be made of. Not a broken heart or an unrequited passion in sight. Instead, a celebration of female solidarity and a clear-eyed ultimatum.

A male fantasist might hope that the first line could be roughly translated as "How about a six-one, then?" But no chance. I think the more accurate paraphrase of "Wannabe" might be: "Now look chum, if we are to be romantically linked, we have to get a few things straight. One, my relationships with my female acquaintances are of a lifelong nature and you'll have to accept them as such. Two, as well as your being my lover,



I propose to see you as a friend, which therefore implies permanence, as per the aforementioned girls. Three, all of this will involve a good deal of unselfish behaviour on your part – you cannot simply do what you fancy, right?

This could be dismissed as superficial tough-girl stuff, the latest designer attitude for the babe-about-town. But then it acquires a new and more deliberative side. Coincidence, perhaps, but the single "Wannabe" was followed by "Say You'll Be There" – a snapshot from the next move in the mating game. The girl is no longer simply announcing her attitudes. Now she is getting in deeper, but still calling the shots:

Now you tell me that you've fallen in love Well I never thought that would be This time you gotta take it easy Throwing far too much emotion at me

There is no need to say you love me It would be better left unsaid I'm giving you everything all that joy can bring this I swear

And all that I ask from you is a promise you will be there

Spice Girls don't tell boys "I love you". They don't want to hear it, either. Instead, they negotiate. Love is dead – but commitment counts.

This girl isn't stupid enough to end up lying awake wondering "will you still love me tomorrow?" And she is certainly not going to have tears on her pillow – Kylie can keep them.

The Spice Girl will say "I love you", but not to a boy, to her mother, in the song "Mama". This adds an extra dimension to the Spice character – not to mention the sheer marketing genius of softening up the potential purchaser

of the Spice Girl mini-rucksack or A4 lever file. Meanwhile, back with Mr Right-ish, once the ground rules are sorted, the Spice Girl can relax, dim the lights and get seductive with the best of them. This is stage three of the romance: and, of course, the third single, "2 Become 1". This is nearer to standard pop drivel, plus a little psychobabble, but she is still giving it the chat and taking the initiative. And ultimately, without missing a beat or destroying the come-on mood, she issues the most straightforward instruction of the lot:

Be a little wiser baby, put it on, put it on If you are trying to tell teenagers about straight sex, that must be worth quite a few government booklets.

The irony is that while the chattering classes dissect "women's issues" and titter at pop-star politics, these flimsy little messages are probably doing more to shape young women's attitudes than any number of consciousness-raising seminars.

And don't forget young men. The Spice Girls are what little boys' dreams are made of. But will their male fans see them as sexy aheads? No more, I suspect, than the average Arsenal fan would shout racist abuse at Ian Wright. The times have changed. And popular icons have influence that intellectuals can only dream of.

The Spice Girls reach parts of the population that John Major and Tony Blair will never reach. Few hear all of the party leaders' many words, many hear all of the Spice Girls' few.

And when it comes to any kind of philosophy or world view – any attempt to reconcile aspiration and altruism, greed and idealism – the one that is buzzing in many a young head is neither Tory nor Labour, but Spice – and not without its lesson for politicians.

The race is on to get out of the bottom The top is high so your roots are forgotten Giving is good as long as you're getting What's driving you it's ambition and betting

The writer is director of communications at the European Movement.

Animal WRONGS



They would never have survived another night in the open.

Beni and Bonney – two tiny puppies, were found shivering and terrified in a ditch on a freezing December night. Pitifully thin and covered in weeping sores, it seemed they had never known love and care.

The Blue Cross gave them the first kindness they had known, as well as urgently-needed veterinary care. After several weeks with us, the pups made a full recovery.

To treat, feed and care for the pups cost around £150. The Blue Cross relies entirely on your generosity to continue its life-saving work. Your monthly gift of £2 or more could help save more tiny lives.

Please help save more animals like Beni and Bonney by supporting the work of The Blue Cross.

Please send me more information about how I can help animals like Beni and Bonney by making a gift to The Blue Cross.

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Sent to: The Blue Cross, Freepost, Room 785C, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxon OX18 4BR. Reg. Charity No. 224392.

THE BLUE CROSS

business & city

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Sorrell close to £3.6m shares bonanza

Mathew Horsman
Media Editor

Martin Sorrell, the chief executive of advertising giant WPP, is just weeks away from a multi-million pound pay-out under the controversial incentive scheme established earlier this year. If the WPP share price remains above 230p until March, Mr Sorrell will be awarded shares worth at least £3.6m.

The shares closed last night at 251.5p, marking the fourth trading day they have stayed above the 230p trigger price. Under the incentive scheme, worth as much as £14.3m over five years if all targets are met, the shares must stay at or above the target for 60 consecutive

trading days and exceed the growth record of the overall stock market.

Thereafter, shares will be awarded at 265p and 304p. Mr Sorrell also has salary, benefits, bonuses and previously awarded share options that could push his five-year total to just over £27m.

The conditions attached to the incentive package, approved by shareholders during a raucous meeting last summer, were defended at the time by Mr Sorrell and the WPP remuneration committee as "nearly impossible" to achieve.

They added that Mr Sorrell had proven his commitment to the company by agreeing to invest more than £2m of his

own money in WPP shares.

Mr Sorrell has already been awarded shares worth £577,000 under a pre-existing incentive scheme, as part of his 1995 pay.

The rich package was criticised by some institutional shareholders because it appeared to reward Mr Sorrell merely for overseeing the return of the company's shares to the level they had reached when he first joined. Since then, the price zoomed to the 900p level, only to collapse following an acquisition binge and the effects of the recession.

Meanwhile, it emerged yesterday that WPP was on target to achieve revenue growth of between 8 and 9 per cent in 1996, well above the conservative target of 5 per cent established last year and higher than the industry average of between 6.5 and 7 per cent. Operating margins will exceed 10.6 per cent, up from 9.6 per cent in 1995 and in line with Mr Sorrell's promise of a percentage point increase in profit margins per year.

Analysts said yesterday the company should continue to perform well in 1997 and 1998, making the top stock price target of 304p eminently achievable.

WPP should see pre-tax profits hit at least £150m in 1996, rising to about £185m next year, when margins are expected to improve to about 11.6 per cent. Higher revenues next year will



It pays to advertise: Martin Sorrell stands to make a fortune if WPP shares remain above 230p until March. The shares closed last night at 251.5p marking the fourth day they have stayed over the trigger price

come despite the lack of one-off events such as the US presidential election and the Olympics, which helped fuel spending on advertising this year.

The margin growth has been achieved by increasing productivity, with head count rising last year by about 3 per cent, far below the rate of revenue growth. But WPP remains below the best performers in the sector, including US giant Omnicom

and Interpublic, which managed margins of more than 13 per cent.

WPP current trades at a discount not only to the highly valued media sector but even to some of the companies in its peer group of publicly traded advertising and media buying companies. Until the recent rise in the shares, Mr Sorrell's firm, which owns Ogilvy & Mather and J. Walter Thompson, was even at a discount to

Cortiant, the troubled advertising company formerly known as Saatchi & Saatchi.

If WPP traded at a similar price-to-earnings ratio as CIA Group, the media buying company, its shares would already be at the 275p level, or higher than all but the top trigger price in Mr Sorrell's incentive package. If they matched the trading multiple of the sector's best performer, Abbott Mead Vickers, the shares would

even exceed the 304p top target.

According to the media team at Salomon Brothers, institutional investors remain under-weighted in WPP, and the shares are rated a buy. Salomon said the company was well placed to withstand a downturn in the economy, given the mix of its marketing, public relations and advertising businesses.

Comment, page 17

Peps war as tax deadline looms

Nic Ciarra

A bitter price war among sellers of unit trusts and personal equity plans looks set to break out in the next three months, with several companies offering to pay investors at least £25 each to take out a plan through them.

The rivalry comes as hundreds of thousands of investors prepare to pour billions of pounds into Peps in the run-up to the end of the 1996 tax year in April.

The industry, which will have attracted almost £600 of retail funds into unit trusts in 1996 and hundreds of millions more into investment trusts, close to the all-time record two years earlier, is preparing to match previous last-minute investment surges in the first months of 1997.

Execution-only brokers, who last year grabbed up to 10 per cent of the market by offering cut-price deals, more than tripling their share in the past five years, are poised to do even better this year.

Their optimism is boosted by hopes of a neutral stock market – at least – in the first half of 1997. It also expects thousands of investors to invest all of their £5,000 allowance for the next tax year, ahead of a general election which Labour is expected to win.

The PEP Shop, based in Nottingham, is offering a Maximum Assured Discount (MAD) scheme, whereby it promises to match the lowest commission made by any competitor and pay a further £25 to savers.

Haydn Green, founder of the PEP Shop, said: "If you look at how discounting operates, it is a case of extending the principle by degree. Once you start, you have to keep going."

"We have found that there are two types of investors, those who want some advice when making a decision and those capable of making up their own minds. We can cater for the second sort extremely cheaply."

Its scheme comes as several other execution-only PEP sellers offer similar schemes, allowing savers to play one broker against another.

PEP Direct, which operates a freephone telephone service in Wolverhampton, yesterday launched its own guarantee to undercut any rival by at least £5.

Brokers hope to survive by living off the 0.5 per cent renewal fee they receive each year if their clients stick with a PEP. But Don Clark, owner of PEP Direct, said: "More and more companies are offering discounts."

"The danger is that one or two may go out of business because they have to wait at least a year before they recoup any money."

Crest hammers out penalties

Jill Treanor

Officials from Crest, the City's new automated share settlement system, are to meet with the City's regulatory bodies early in the new year to hammer out a standardised way to levy penalties on firms which miss settlement dates for deals.

The penalties are likely to take the form of fines but could also involve naming firms which are persistent offenders. Crest is aiming to persuade the regulators, such as the Securities and Futures Authority (SFA) and the recognised investment exchanges, to agree that deals struck on their exchanges are subject to Crest rules.

"If we can get all the regulators and the recognised investment exchanges to agree to

their members or contracts being subject to Crest settlement discipline it will make it more effective and give it more clout," said Paul Symons, manager of Crest.

While Crest aims to have the new procedures in place by April or May, the Exchange is planning temporary rules.

Richard Kilsby, director of market services at the Exchange, told compliance officers: "We support Crest's intention to introduce [a disciplinary regime] across all its participants and believe that such a regime should be at least as effective as the 'buying in' process operated under Talisman."

The temporary measures include a £10 fine for deals which are seven days beyond their intended settlement date but the fine can reach £25,000.

Christmas all over again as the Footsie smashes 4,100 barrier

Magnus Grimmond

The stock market looks set to end the year at an all-time high as the blue chip FTSE 100 index powered through the 4,100 barrier yesterday to a record close. The pound was also in fine fettle yet again, hitting a four-year high against the Japanese yen at one stage and ending near its peak against the German mark.

Despite the likely impact of the currency's strength on overseas earnings, the Footsie shrugged aside thinly-populated dealing rooms and two of the top 100 shares going ex-dividend to end 24.7 points higher at 4,115.7.

The index was fuelled by the

breaking of new records on Wall Street, where the Dow was showing a reading 22 points higher as London closed. The US market is now showing a gain of around 29 per cent on the year.

The final tally in London was well above the previous record of 4,092.5 set only on Christmas Eve, although City observers cautioned against reading too much into the move.

Steve Wright, a market analyst with brokers Barclays de Zoete Wedd, pointed out that volumes, with 421.5m shares traded yesterday, were well below normal levels. He described it as an "end of year rally", with some of the institutions' cash

positions being unwound. "Sentiment has been quite good in the last week or two that the market would end on a high. There has been a lot of corporate activity generating a lot of cash, which will be handed back to the institutions."

BZW is looking for the Footsie to end 1997 at 4,300, but Mr Wright said the current strength of the market was a selling opportunity. Utilities had recovered from the possibility of Labour introducing a windfall tax, but there could still be further shocks, he warned.

"I can see some of that nervousness coming back into the market if certain things are said by certain politicians, particularly over things like ACT

[advance corporation tax]". Philip Isherwood of Kleinwort Benson Securities agreed that there was nothing fundamental behind yesterday's market strength.

"It's not a question of what's going on. It's a question of what's not going on."

The main story yesterday was the absence of selling pressure since London and New York survived key "witching hours" on the Friday before Christmas, when five different index futures and options expired simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic. If the market had been vulnerable, it would have shown itself then, he said.

London's blue chips were

led higher by British Aerospace, boosted by hopes that it would benefit from restructuring at the Airbus Industrie consortium. There was also a strong showing from the retail sector after good Christmas sales. The market's rise swamped the move ex-dividend by British Telecom and Severn Trent, which knocked 3.9 points off the index.

Meanwhile, sterling remained firm, ending marginally ahead at 195.90 against the yen and 70 pence on the mark at 2.6340. Against the dollar, the pound ended at \$1.6905, up from \$1.6881. Dealers said interest rate hopes continued to be behind the rise, although volumes traded remain thin.

Manufacturing in UK continues to go downhill

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

The importance of manufacturing to the British economy continues to slide with only two British areas now in the "top 20" regions in Europe.

Based on the percentage of the workforce employed in the sector, only the East Midlands, with 35.4 per cent in manufacturing and the West Midlands with 34.4 per cent, are among the top regions.

Baden-Wuerttemberg in Germany comes first with 43 per cent of employment in manufacturing and second is Lombardy in Italy with 42 per cent, according to the most recent figures from the European labour force survey. Six of the top 10 areas are in Germany, three in Italy and one in Spain.

The North of England comes 27th with 31.3 per cent of its workforce in manufacturing, just above the European average of 30.2 per cent. The 11 other regions are all below the average figure.

The North West comes 34th out of 75, East Anglia 44th, Scotland 48th, Northern Ireland 51st and the South West 52nd. The South East is 65th, just

ahead of areas such as Sicily and the Mediterranean region of France. Even Madeira comes 26th.

John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB general union which collated the statistics, said the figures amounted to an indictment of the government.

"Nothing better illustrates better the dismal failure of Tory industrial policy than this league table. There was a time when Britain was the workshop of the world and the West Midlands was the workshop of Britain. Now the East Midlands scrapes into the top 20."

"It was fashionable in the early days of Thatcherism to say that manufacturing did not matter. It does. The prosperity of Europe's regions is in direct relationship to their manufacturing base. The UK needs a sustained period of investment in its manufacturing industries to secure the country's future."

Figures from the European survey also show that British regions have the second highest percentage of part-time workers in Europe behind the Netherlands. The top four areas, all in Holland, vary from 35 per cent to 40 per cent.

Europe's top 20 manufacturing regions

Region	% of workforce in manufacturing
1. Baden-Wuerttemberg	43.3
2. Lombardy	41.83
3. Sachsen	39.79
4. Thuringen	37.79
5. Bayern	37.54
6. Sachsen-Anhalt	37.27
7. Nord Est	37.26
8. Norrebro	37.20
9. Rheinland-Pfalz	36.97
10. Nord West	36.96
11. Este	36.53
12. Nordrhein-Westfalen	35.96
13. Centro (I)	35.64
14. Brandenburg	35.62
15. East Midlands	35.39
16. Westoesterreich	35.32
17. Saarland	35.14
18. Est	35.14
19. Emilia-Romagna	35.06
20. West Midlands	34.33

Source: Eurostat

Dutch insurer strikes record \$3.5bn US deal

Jill Treanor
Banking Correspondent

Aegon, the Dutch insurer which owns Scottish Equitable, yesterday pulled off the largest life insurance acquisition in the US and the biggest ever by a Dutch firm when it struck a \$3.5bn deal to buy Provident Corporation of the US.

The acquisition, which is expected to be concluded in the first half of the New Year, will increase the size of Aegon by 25 per cent. It will almost double the size of the group's US earnings.

Provident Corporation is based in Louisville, Kentucky and consists of Provident Bancorp, a consumer lending organisation, and three insurance divisions – agency, direct insurance and capital management.

The three insurance operations will become part of Aegon USA, while Bancorp will be spun off to existing Provident shareholders immediately prior to the acquisition.

The deal involves a tax-free share swap under which Provident shareholders receive Aegon shares worth \$2.62bn and Aegon USA takes over loans worth \$780m and preferred stock worth \$100m.

"This record-setting acquisition is fully in line with Aegon's

strategic strategy. It is earnings enhancing, highly compatible and will provide a healthy boost to our growth into the next century," said Kees Storm, chairman of Aegon.

Irving Bailey, chairman of Provident Corporation said: "The deal provides our insurance activities with a committed partner... while freeing Provident Bancorp to develop its considerable potential as an independent consumer lending specialist."

"Our shareholders thus end up with stakes in two strong and successful companies, each a fast growing leader in its respective field," Mr Bailey added.

The deal comes at the end of a year which has seen rapid consolidation in the insurance industry world-wide.

The industry is facing fierce competition from new entrants to the business, such as banks, as well as fighting rising costs.

In the UK, Royal and Sun Alliance merged earlier this year putting hundreds of jobs at risk.

Two French insurance companies, AXA and Union des Assurances de Paris, also announced merger plans in November to create the world's second-largest insurance company after Nippon Life of Japan.

STOCK MARKETS						
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	3115.70	+24.70	+0.8	4115.70	2632.30	3.86
FTSE 250	3492.20	+14.20	+0.4	4588.50	2075.30	3.50
FTSE 350	2042.20	+11.10	+0.5	2642.20	1816.60	3.78
FTSE Small Cap	2178.70	+7.58	+0.3	2244.36	1954.06	3.28
FTSE All Share	2011.74	+10.58	+0.5	2011.74	1791.95	3.75
New York	6590.90	+19.99	+0.3	6560.91	5032.94	2.02
Japan	15061.35	-7.69	-0.0	22666.80	19161.71	0.811
Hong Kong	13480.75	+76.61	+0.6	13530.95	10204.87	3.101
Frankfurt	2287.25	+34.97	+1.2	2909.91	2253.36	1.611

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES						
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	Long Bond	50 Year
UK	6.16	6.97	7.51	7.42	7.59	7.57
US	5.38	5.72	6.28	6.81	6.52	5.99
Japan	0.25	0.50	2.91	2.91	2.91	2.91
Germany	3.09	3.19	6.78	6.03	6.68	6.85

MAIN PRICE CHANGES						
Index	Price	Change	% Change	Index	Price	Change
Biocompatibles Int	800	48.5	6.5	White Carbons Gpt	39.5	3.5
Close Bros Group	336.5	16	5.0	Low & Bonar	408.5	7.5
Liberty Int Hldgs	430	19.5	4.8	Nymex Cablecomms	109	2

CURRENCIES

The figure consists of three line charts showing currency exchange rates from 1990 to 1995. Each chart has a vertical axis for the rate and a horizontal axis for time (years). The \$/£ chart shows a steady increase from 1.60 to 1.70. The £/DM chart shows a steady increase from 2.60 to 2.70. The \$/¥ chart shows a steady increase from 100 to 110.

Other Yen exchange rates and US Dollar Index at 2000 hours

Pound				Dollar			
	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago		Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
\$/£ (London)	1.6902	+0.146	1.5845	£ (London)	0.5916	+0.04	0.6441
\$/¥ (New York)	1.6910	+1.90c	1.6510	£ (NY)	0.5914	-0.67	0.6447
DM/£ (London)	2.6311	+0.0001	2.2222	DM (London)	1.5567	+0.1567	1.6313
¥ (London)	195.880	+¥0.598	160.163	¥ (London)	115.880	+¥0.45	103.155
\$/Index	85.6	unch	83.1	\$/Index	88.8	+0.1	84.0

OTHER INDICATORS

	Yesterday	Day's change	18 Weeks		Index	Latest Yr	Best Price
Oil Brent \$	23.62	+0.05	18.33	RPI	153.9+2.72c	149.8	18 Jan
Gold \$	369.40	-0.15	387.05	GDP	108.9+2.32c	105.7	27 Jan
Gold £	218.55	+0.41	247.30	Base Rates	—	6.00pc	6.75

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Remoteness that characterised a sad decline

Lord Weinstock has chosen the medium of the *Financial Times* for a long and reflective series of interviews to mark his departure from GEC after 33 years at the helm – well, near departure anyway, for he retains the curious title of honorary chairman emeritus. There's not much in there that's going to surprise close observers of this clever and resilient industrialist, except perhaps this – the admission that he never visits factories. Lord Weinstock justifies this extraordinary omission on the basis that if he visited one plant every half-day, he could not get round all GEC's plants in a year. The effect would be minimal anyway, he claims, since people would know he wouldn't be back for quite a while.

Perhaps Lord Weinstock is just being a little more honest than his peers in disclosing this apparent lapse. Most busy executives rarely have time to visit the factory floor. Certain of them have actually made a virtue of it. Lord White, the late chairman of Hanson America, liked to boast that in all his years at Hanson he had never visited any of the businesses he controlled. Indeed he would have regarded it as a failure to have done so, for to visit a business is only to allow yourself to be polluted by excuses as to why things cannot be done. Much better, he always used to say, just to set a target and hold management to it.

Though he wouldn't put it in quite that way, this was plainly Lord Weinstock's way

too. He ran his company via a book of numbers, a set of "ratios and statistics". As a way of keeping his company out of financial danger, and of delivering solid, if unspectacular, value to shareholders, it plainly worked. But there is also arrogance and a certain bankruptcy of leadership in a managing director who thinks it not necessary to visit his places of production. Such management remoteness from the workplace may not have been a cause of Britain's post-war industrial decline, but it certainly seems reasonable to see it as symptomatic.

Of course it is not possible for a man in Lord Weinstock's position to get round all his factories. But to visit none? The secret of good management in a large group of companies is not so very different from that of a small company, most successful entrepreneurs will tell you. It is to be involved with the product and the people who make it and sell it, to demand the impossible and to instill in employees that sense of enthusiasm and purpose that helps them meet those demands. Is that really possible from a darkened room in Stanhope Gate? Of course it isn't. Let's hope George Simpson, Lord Weinstock's successor, visits a few more factories.

When Martin Sorrell's breath-takingly rich buy package at WPP was finally approved in June last year, after some

adjustment by outraged institutional shareholders, the company said it was very unlikely the full amount would ever be paid. The targets were just too demanding, said both Mr Sorrell and the chairman of the remuneration committee.

One and a half years later and they don't look quite so demanding. The WPP share price topped 250p yesterday, well above the 230p target price that delivers Mr Sorrell his £3.5m initial payout, not counting his already princely salary, bonuses, pensions and the like. Sure, the shares have to maintain their target levels for 60 consecutive days, and yes, the company must outperform the market, but both requirements look within reach.

Mr Sorrell has to hit 265p to get the next tranche of shares and then 304p by September 1997 to get the full whack of about £27m, of which £14m at least will be in the form of free shares.

Will he go all the way? Analysts are beginning to think so. Advertising spend was up by between 6 and 7 per cent in 1996, but WPP, following Mr Sorrell's restructuring efforts, saw its revenues climb by nearly 9 per cent per cent and margins widen to more than 10 per cent. Pre-tax profits should grow to £185m next year. If investors were willing to give WPP the same measure of support they award to the sector leader, Abbott Mead Vickers – which trades on more than 20 times next year's earnings – the shares would already

be high enough for Mr Sorrell to get the full package.

That the shares are still on a rather subdued 16 times earnings is a measure of the City's caution at backing Mr Sorrell a second time. He's already lost one fortune. Many are still furious that he's been given the chance to rebase and make himself a packet merely by returning the company to where it once was. To be fair on Mr Sorrell, he has managed, through some energetic cost cutting and some excellent client prospecting work to get the show back on the road.

There is still a chance the shares will continue to underperform, depriving Mr Sorrell of his pile. But with two pretty decent years for the economy and advertising ahead of him, and with most analysts projecting better-than-average growth at WPP, the chances he will see his way into the serious money have to be rated as reasonably good and getting better. If these are tough targets, it makes you wonder about the softer ones enshrined in many an executive long term incentive plan.

News that Russia is set to sign a deal with the Central Selling Organisation will be met with scepticism by De Beers, the South African minerals giant which controls the diamond sales cartel. The last agreement between Russia's biggest diamond producer and the South

Africans ran out a year ago and the negotiations to renew it ended in the autumn. Today's already twice-extended deadline for a new deal is almost certain to be breached.

Both sides claim to have been suffering from the rugged end to the old arrangements. De Beers has complained bitterly of the "leakage" of Russian rough diamonds, nominally intended for domestic use, onto international markets. The result has been to blow a hole in the CSO's dominance of the world diamond "market".

Not that it shows. Last year set another record for worldwide diamond sales, which rose 7 per cent to \$4.83bn. Prices have also been rising, despite Russia. De Beers managed a 3 per cent rise on average in July.

Is the CSO a bad thing? The European Commission appears to be able to live with it, even if the Americans cannot. The truth is, however, that its partial breach seems to have done De Beers little harm. It might even persuade the company to step up its marketing efforts. Spurred by the cessation of hostilities in the Middle East, the company mounted its first advertising campaign in the Gulf earlier this year, while the Pacific Rim represents a vast and as yet under-exploited potential market. It may be that a dose of free market competition from the Russians would do everyone some good.

Malaysia on course to realise a dream with millionth Proton car

Stephen Vines
Singapore

Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad's dream of creating a world-class industry took a step forward yesterday when he presided over a ceremony marking the production of the millionth Proton car.

The landmark event came after 11 years of manufacture and was celebrated as something of a national achievement. Proton has ambitious plans to export 40 per cent of its output.

At present, however, only the British market has shown real enthusiasm for the low-priced, high-specification Proton range, which is based on models developed by its Japanese partner, the Mitsubishi Motor Corporation.

In October Proton made a large investment in improving its technology by spending \$51m to acquire the Lotus Group which makes sports cars but also gives Proton access to engine and transmission technology which it has been buying in from Japan.

The relationship between the state-controlled company which owns Proton, and its Japanese partner has been far from smooth. At one point Mitsubishi executives were so exasperated by the local management that they virtually took control of the whole project despite the fact that it was supposed to be a Malaysian flag-waving exercise.

Relations have since improved but there is lingering resentment in Malaysia about the Japanese company's reluctance to transfer technology. This was particularly disillusioning for the prime minister



Into an elite club: Proton joins some of the other famous models to have rolled a million on the production line (clockwise from top: the Proton, Mini, Morris-Minor, VW Beetle)

who was then advocating a "Look East" policy to learn from Japan rather than the West.

Dr Mahathir is, to put it mildly, a car enthusiast. He steam-rolled the plan to establish the Proton company, to create Malaysia's national car programme, against considerable scepticism from the motor industry.

The first Proton Sagas were indeed little more than locally assembled Mitsubishi models but local content has increased

significantly and a higher level of local design has been incorporated in more recent models.

However, the development of Proton has taken a heavy toll on the rest of the Malaysian car industry because it enjoys a preferential customs duties regime, making Protons far cheaper than rival locally assembled cars.

A second national car programme has been launched to produce compact models. This too poses a threat to other parts of the local industry.

However, next year the tariffs on other models will have to be reduced if Malaysia is to comply with international trade agreements.

This means that Proton will need to reduce costs if it intends to maintain its policy of competing on price. Dr Mahathir called on Mitsubishi to reduce the cost of components and other supplies to help in this objective.

Proton announced yesterday that it plans to turn out 2 million cars in five years' time.

Annual production will be increased from 180,000 to 230,000 by the end of next year.

The national car programmes were seen by the government as part of a strategy to upgrade Malaysia's industry.

Dr Mahathir said that they had demonstrated their ability in this respect because their output demonstrated that Malaysian workers were able to produce cars comparable in quality to those sold in demanding markets such as the United Kingdom.

Bumper £10bn new issues for London market

Magnus Grimond

Last year saw a bumper £10.12bn of new issues on the London stock market, but this year could be trickier, according to a survey published yesterday. KPMG Corporate Finance is forecasting that there will be a rush of companies hoping to float in the next three months to beat the uncertainty caused by the general election.

Thereafter the flood is likely to be temporarily staunching by the political uncertainty surrounding the poll, while valuations could be hit by a correction on Wall Street, the accountants warn.

Last year's figure compares with just £2.61bn in 1995, but just failed to beat the record £10.14bn achieved in 1994. In all there were 119 new issues in 1996, up from 86 the previous year, but little more than half the 218 in 1994.

KPMG's Neil Austin says the rot set in in the autumn. "I think things had been simmering for a while and the trigger was the fall in the US market, which caused three floats to be pulled. If things had been going well, that wouldn't have had the same effect."

Pub group Discovery Inns, Wise Speke, the stockbrokers and the self-off of certain engineering businesses from Morgan Crucible all announced the cancellation or postponement of flotation plans during December.

"I think people had been going cool on new issues since the autumn and that coolness

then turned to uncertainty, causing people to become more choosy."

But Mr Austin said the conditions remained ripe for the market. Companies would want to get in before the election, which has to be called before the summer. Also, institutions' cash piles have been boosted by recent takeovers. And the growth rates of the smaller companies' which dominate the new issues market will look attractive against lower rates from larger companies.

There is then likely to be a hiatus before the summer, with stronger activity picking up in the autumn, he forecasts, fuelled by the good economic outlook in the UK.

Overseas factors, particularly the level of the US market, could hit valuations, but should not result in issues being pulled, he expects.

The average value of flotations shot up to £85m from £30m last year, led by the likes of Orange, the mobile telephone group, British Energy, the nuclear generating group, and Railtrack, owner of Britain's railway tracks.

Separately, the Centre of Management Buy-Out Research said that buy-outs and buy-ins hit a record £7.5bn during 1996, some £51m more than in the previous record year of 1989. The latest figure is 39 per cent up on the 1995 buy-out market.

Separately, Britain's buy-out market reached a record £7.5bn in 1996, up 39 per cent from last year, according to a study released on Monday.

Irish threat to Bupa plans

Nic Cicutti

Plans by Bupa, the healthcare provider, to grab a slice of the £300m health insurance market in the Republic of Ireland could be dealt a critical blow by the Irish Government, which claims its schemes fall foul of the law.

The refusal of the Republic's Department of Health, which regulates the market, to authorise Bupa's launch on New Year's Day would deal a severe blow to the insurer's bid to expand at a time of difficult trading conditions in the UK.

Bupa currently has a 45 per cent share of the private health insurance market in the UK, worth about £1bn in premium income each year. Its market share has declined steadily from a high point of about 70 per cent over 15 years ago.

The row in Ireland concerns the UK insurer's plans to mount an assault on the near-monopoly enjoyed until recently by the Voluntary Health Insurance Board (VHI), which is part-owned by the Irish state.

VHI policies cover 1.4 million people, almost 40 per cent of the total population, compared to just 11 per cent of UK residents with similar cover.

The policies are structured so that one can buy varying levels of cover, with the vast majority of people choosing an option which allows them some sort of care in a private hospital, or private care in the state system.

A recent Health Insurance Act allows competition to VHI, as long as all age groups pay the same premiums for their cover. The aim is not to allow "cherry-picking" of healthy policyholders, leaving the rest to pay more.

Bupa's plan competes with VHI by offering a very basic minimum insurance cover. Its more popular options pay cash to people needing hospital treatment rather than paying for it on their behalf. Bupa believes this allows it to avoid the Health Insurance Act. These options are age-related.

But a Department of Health statement said: "The effect of such a package may be to contravene the definition of a health insurance contract, as set out in the Act."

Tony McWeeney, sales and marketing director at VHI, said: "We welcome competition. But we have obtained legal opinion that Bupa's plans are not lawful as they stand."

He added that VHI reserved the right to take legal action in a bid to block Bupa if the Government gives the schemes its go-ahead.

IN BRIEF

• The top building societies are virtually unanimous in forecasting a further rise of 7-8 per cent in average UK property prices in 1997. Yesterday Birmingham & Midshires said house prices are set to climb by 8 per cent this year, adding £5,000 to an average £65,000 property. Last week Nationwide forecast a 7 per cent rise next year, much the same as in 1996. The Halifax is tipping 7-8 per cent in 1997 and again in 1998. But chief executive at Birmingham & Midshires, Mike Jackson, warns that forecasters looking for a 10 to 15 per cent increase are overly optimistic. Uncertainties caused by the general election and fears of further interest rate rises will "keep the recovery steady", he claims.

• Greggs, the bakery retailer, is paying £3.2m for Birketts, the Cumbrian based baker which has 57 shops. Birketts made profits of £332,000 last year on sales of £11m. The deal expands Greggs' coverage beyond its core region of Newcastle, Glasgow and Manchester.

• Littlewoods, the retail and football pools empire, has acquired the scratch card group, UK Charity Lotteries, for an undisclosed sum. Littlewoods said UK Charity Lotteries' "Lucky" scratch-card products would be added to its existing portfolio of lottery products. Littlewoods said the deal would give its lottery business a turnover of £70m. The group said its business would represent "a serious alternative" to Camelot, which operates the National Lottery.

• The drop in the annual rate of business failures in Britain has dried up according to figures for 1996 from Dun & Bradstreet released today. Nearly 800 businesses are failing each week. There were 41,107 liquidations and personal bankruptcies during the year compared with 41,303 in 1995 – a drop of less than 0.5 per cent. Falls had been much steeper previously – 11.2 per cent in 1993 and 21.9 per cent in 1994. There are big geographical contrasts, however, as London continues to rebound from the recession. Business failures in London dropped by 15.4 per cent, compared with the East Midlands where failures rose by 17.6 per cent.

• Shareholders in T&N yesterday approved an EGM resolution relating to the provision for its asbestos-related disease costs. The group announced last month that it would make a £373m provision this year to limit its potential liabilities relating to future asbestos related claims.

• James Fisher has sold its 50 per cent share in Vectis Shipping to joint venture partner Carisbrook Shipping for £719,000. Vectis was formed in 1993 and operates two short sea freight vessels. Vectis made profits of £132,000 last year but has been hit by poor trading in 1996.

Carlton and CableTel to seek licences to operate digital terrestrial TV services

Matthew Horsman
Media Editor

Carlton Communications, Michael Green's media group, and International CableTel, the cable operator, plan to bid for licences to operate digital terrestrial television services. The *Independent* has learned.

The two media companies are in talks with programmers, including US-controlled Flextech, the pay-TV packager, to reach preliminary carriage agreements prior to the 31 January deadline for DTT applications.

The programming talks,

which are at an early stage, could see Flextech's joint venture channels with the BBC made exclusively to either Carlton or CableTel, although Flextech is believed to have reserved the right to offer the channels for broadcast on other digital platforms.

It is understood that at least four channels are being offered by Flextech/BBC – Horizons, Showcase, Style and One-TV, the pop music channel, at a suggested cost of 75p each per subscriber. If either Carlton or CableTel want an additional channel, possible Arena/Learning, another joint venture

with the BBC, the price would drop to 65p.

Flextech is understood to be prepared to strike a similar deal for satellite broadcasters, and has held preliminary talks with BSkyB, the satellite pay-TV giant, about offering the channels for satellite distribution.

Flextech and the BBC are believed to be open to an exclusive DTT and digital cable distribution deal, but the price per subscriber would have to be much higher, it is understood. Flextech may also seek a deal to distribute two US channels on DTT, in league with Universal and Warner, the

Hollywood studios. That possibility is being discussed by Flextech's parent, US cable giant TCI, and Time-Warner, in New York.

Meanwhile, it emerged that the BBC and Flextech, which plan to launch as many as eight pay-TV channels together, are considering a film channel based on the BBC's library of quality made-for-TV films.

DTT, which is scheduled for launch in mid-1998, would boast as many as 30 channels. Carlton is expected to bid for all three commercial DTT multiplexes, and is the only ITV company to have made the

commitment. Two of the remaining multiplexes are reserved for TTV, Channel 4 and the BBC, while the last is available to commercial bidders provided they agree to carry Channel 5 and S4C, the Welsh-language channel. These services will feature "simulcasts" of existing terrestrial channels, as well as additional services.

International CableTel, which owns the transmission company NTL, is understood to be attracted by the prospects for supplying transmission services, and is also expected to bid for the three available commercial multiplexes.

Barings defies critics by topping M&A league

Jul Treanor
Banking Correspondent

Barings, the bank which was driven to collapse in 1995 by Nick Leeson, has defied its critics and stayed at the top of the league table of mergers and acquisitions advisory work for the second year running.

The bank, which was bought by ING, the Dutch financial services group, achieved this position in a year which has been highly lucrative for corporate financiers.

A record £1.1bn in fees was generated overall, as were

bumper bonuses to staff, according to *Acquisitions Monthly*, the trade magazine.

During 1996 Barings worked on 31 deals worth £11.8bn and 11 of these were public takeovers worth £9.3bn.

The largest mandate was to advise Royal Insurance on its £2.4bn merger with Sun Alliance.

"This proves to the market that the excellent show Barings made in 1995 was not just a flash in the pan. The bank really is a force to be reckoned with," said Philip Healey, editor of *Acquisitions Monthly*.

Second in the league table is Lazard Brothers which benefited from its expertise in hostile bids. The Lazards team advised Granada on its £3.6bn hostile takeover of Forté and Rentokil on its £2.1bn bid for BET.

SBC Warburg, third in the table, was one of the beneficiaries of the £40m dished out by Forté in its desperate, but failed, attempt to avoid Granada's grasp. The bank retained its position in the table despite a wave of defections after the merger between Swiss Bank Corporation and Warburg's last year.

As business boomed during the year, fuelled in part by race to merge ahead of the general election, so did the hiring spree and compensation packages offered.

Merrill Lynch, the US financial firm, hired Guy Dawson from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell and as a result was catapulted into the *Acquisitions Monthly* top 10.

Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, in contrast, slid from eighth to 14th.

Bill Harrison was tempted to BZW, the investment banking arm of Barclays, from Robert

Fleming, on a pay deal worth close to £6.0m over five years. George Magan, the veteran corporate financier, sold his business, Hambro Magan, to NatWest Markets in a deal which was rumoured to have created as many as 100 millionaires.

In the race to find mergers and acquisitions experts, many professionals were offered guaranteed bonuses because they were hired during the financial year and not, as is more traditional, at year-end once their bonuses have been paid out.

Top 10 M&A advisers

Adviser	Value £m
Barings Brothers (1)	11,789
Lazard Brothers (2)	11,096
SBC Warburg (3)	10,320
Schroders (7)	9,626
NM Rothschild (5)	9,348
Kleinwort Benson (9)	8,987
Hambros Bank (16)	7,825
UBS (20)	7,671
Merrill Lynch (-)	7,661
Goldman Sachs (10)	7,461
Acquisitions Monthly	

Someone you've not heard of cleans up the opposition

Tom Stevenson on James Dyson and the success of his revolutionary vacuum cleaner

James Dyson may be the most successful businessman you've never heard of, but his anonymity is likely to be short-lived. An award-winning designer, the revolutionary vacuum cleaner he launched only three years ago is taking Britain by storm and threatening to make Dyson as familiar a household name as Hoover itself.

He has looked bankruptcy in the eye on many occasions, faced down the wrath of the giant corporations that dominate the electrical appliance industry and which ridiculed his invention, fought off international conspiracies to plagiarise his designs, and come out on top.

With not a shred of assistance from the venture capitalists you might have thought were set up to fund just his sort of business, James Dyson has built up a company turning over £100m a year and tripling in size every 12 months.

And because of the brick wall he came up against in funding his crazy dream, he owns the Royal College of Art student, he is the sole beneficiary of a company with ambitions to dominate the household appliances market in the UK and, who knows, around the world.

The Dual Cyclone vacuum cleaner is not Mr Dyson's first familiar invention. He was behind the odd-looking ball-broom that for a while dominated

the wheelbarrow market. But it is the most lucrative and certainly the most improbable. As one early critic wrongly pointed out, "If this is so much better how come Hoover hasn't invented it already."

Like most successful inven-

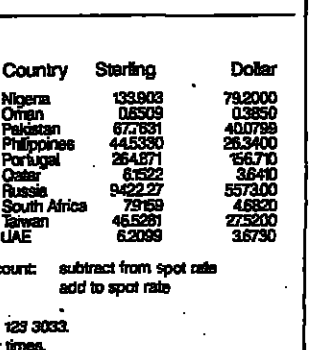
ket in only three years. Half-a-million consumers this year have been prepared to shell out more than twice as much as they would have had to pay for a rival cleaner.

The growth of this business has been prodigious. Launched in March 1993, sales reached £5m in the first year, £10m the following year, and £40m in 1995, from which Dyson netted an £8m profit, and are forecast to reach a staggering £100m this year.

As the chart shows, during that time Dyson has left its competitors standing. Partly thanks to its £199 price tag the Dyson dominates the market by value. In unit terms too it is poised to overtake Electrolux.

The challenge for the company now is to manage this exponential growth without becoming just the sort of complacent, bloated multinational it has had to fight along the way. For now the art student ethos lives on and Dyson refuses to allow anyone to wear a suit to work. They think "everything I say will carry weight because I'm wearing a suit and therefore I'm a serious businessman." I want people to behave like human beings.

The Dual Cyclone vacuum cleaner is so much better than its rivals is proved by the chart below, showing how it has come from nowhere to dominate its market.



Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.6002	1.6002	1.6002	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Canada	0.7125	0.7125	0.7125	0.7125	0.7125	0.7125	0.7125
Germany	0.6371	0.6371	0.6371	0.6371	0.6371	0.6371	0.6371
France	0.6540	0.6540	0.6540	0.6540	0.6540	0.6540	0.6540
Italy	0.2040	0.2040	0.2040	0.2040	0.2040	0.2040	0.2040
Japan	0.0070	0.0070	0.0070	0.0070	0.0070	0.0070	0.0070
Spain	0.1660	0.1660	0.1660	0.1660	0.1660	0.1660	0.1660
Sweden	0.1030	0.1030	0.1030	0.1030	0.1030	0.1030	0.1030
Switzerland	0.7500	0.7500	0.7500	0.7500	0.7500	0.7500	0.7500
Australia	0.6900	0.6900	0.6900	0.6900	0.6900	0.6900	0.6900
South Africa	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
New Zealand	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
South Korea	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
China	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
India	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Indonesia	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Singapore	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark	Spot	1 month	3 months
Argentina	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Brazil	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Colombia	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Costa Rica	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cuba	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Dominican Rep	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Ecuador	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
El Salvador	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Guatemala	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Honduras	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
India	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Indonesia	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Japan	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Korea	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Malaysia	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Mexico	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nicaragua	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Panama	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Paraguay	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Peru	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Philippines	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Poland	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Portugal	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Romania	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Russia	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Saudi Arabia	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
South Africa	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
South Korea	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Spain	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Sweden	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Switzerland	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Taiwan	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Thailand	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Turkey	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
USA	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
UK	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
USSR	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Venezuela	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zimbabwe	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount; rates quoted low to high are at a premium; *Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals.

For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0800 123 3033.

Cable cost 50p per minute (day rate) 45p other times.

Source: Reuters, 31 Dec 1996

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Humbug! Trust an accountant to spoil the seasonal festivities

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

Scrooge is alive and well. Trust the accountants to spoil the Christmas fun. David Harrison, national tax director of Kidosons Impey, is advising companies to rein in their spending on office parties.

Mr Harrison warns that employees may be pursuing unforseen tax bills as well as sore heads if their employers exceed the tax allowance of £75 per individual for festive entertainment.

Mr Harrison says: "Employers must plan carefully to avoid exceeding the £75 limit. This is a cumulative total for the whole tax year and includes the cost of VAT and any transportation." So taxis home are subject to that tax man's eagle eye, as well as the usual bubbly and canapés.

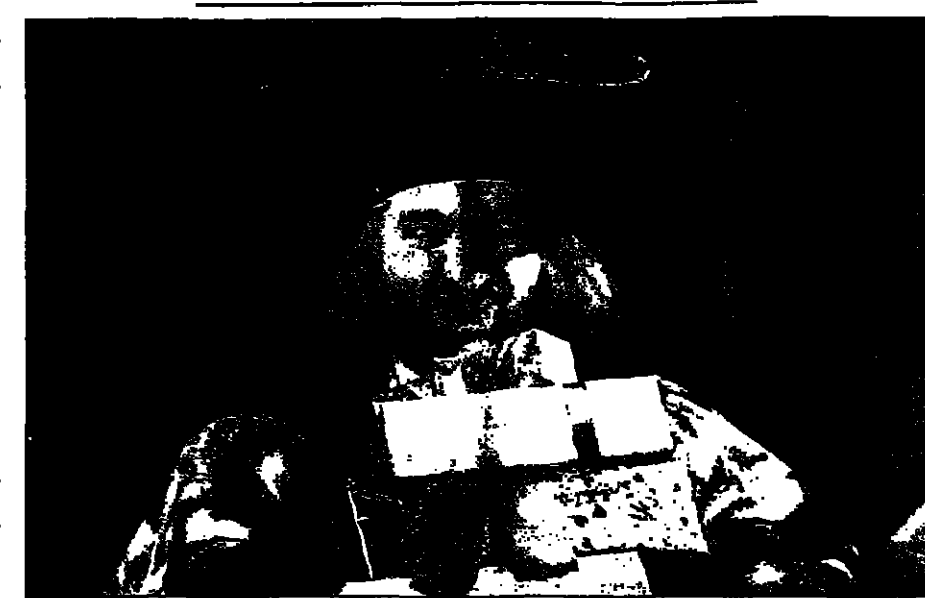
According to Mr Harrison, if the employee's tax free benefit is broken, then the total benefit - including the £75 - is assessable "on every employee attending the functions".

The pain will show up on the employees' tax liability in April, he adds. "Employers should check the cumulative totals and, if there is any danger of exceeding the limit, consider a small recharge of some of the cost to avoid liability to tax."

"A small recharge," eh? Worse is to come. Mr Harrison concludes: "If you are planning another company function in the spring, make sure that it is held after 6 April, the beginning of the new tax year."

Bah, humbug.

Travelling to work in London at the moment is a halcyon experience, what with empty roads, uncrowded tubes and plenty of empty buses whizzing around. The City seems to have taken this recent idea of the two-week holiday over Christmas and New Year to heart. Hardly any of the businessmen on the New Year's Honours list were at



Alive and well: Scrooge, the notorious party-pooper, has reared his head again

work. Or to be fair, not in the office, anyway. Raj Kumar Bagri, CBE, chairman, London Metal Exchange and chairman of brokers MetDist, rang me from Bali to comment on his life peers.

1996 must surely have been the "annus horribilis" of the LME, I suggested, what with the Hamanaka copper scandal in which a Sumitomo broker was revealed to have run of billions of yen in losses. Mr Bagri would have none of this: "Sumitomo is not a member of the LME. It is not governed by the rules and regulations of the LME."

"You can ask anyone anywhere - there is no antidote to rogue traders. Look what happened to Daiwa in the US, look at what Nick Leeson did in Singapore."

All we can do is strengthen our regulations and laws. There is nothing markets can do to stop these kinds of forays.

It's up to the companies and their own internal con-

trols. We can't act as policemen in peoples' own offices."

So there we are. As Mr Bagri says himself, he has always been "a very no-nonsense chairman of the LME."

As for his life peers, he says: "I feel greatly honoured and feel a great deal of humility. This will be a great encouragement to Asian businessmen in the UK and to other ethnic communities. They will see there are no barriers to reaching the top."

As for other businessmen honoured, Bob Horton of Railtrack was "out with relatives - but obviously delighted with his knighthood", a Railtrack spokesman tells me.

No one was in at John Laing, so nobody could comment on chairman John Laing's knighthood. The same goes for the London Docklands Development Corporation, whose chairman John Pickard, a former head of the Sears stores

group, also received a knighthood. "No one is in till Thursday," an LDDC security guard informs me.

David Potter, chairman and chief executive, Flixon, received a CBE "for services to the manufacturing industry", but when I rang Páin I was told that "nobody's in - although you could contact Mr Potter tomorrow via his secretary".

Meanwhile David Rowland, chairman of Lloyd's of London, heard about his knighthood while on holiday in New Zealand. There again, he has an excellent case for a break, having steered the debt-laden insurance market successfully through its £3.2bn restructuring.

Last but not least, Peter Davis, chief executive of the Prudential, rang me from his home to say how delighted he was at his knighthood for services in training and industry. "I'm just doing the washing up as my wife's got flu," he explained. Bravo.

John Willcock

Interest Rates

UK		Germany	
Base	6.00%	Discount	250%
France		Lombard	450%
Intervention	3.15%	Canada	
Italy		Prime	4.75%
Discount	7.5%	Discount	500%
Netherlands		Dennmark	
Argentina	2.50%	Discount	3.25%

sport

Germany did not get anywhere near the credit they deserved given that it was probably their weakest squad for years

With the year drawing to a close, it is an appropriate time to reflect on the year's major football event. Everyone, it seems, has had their say on England's performance, but in all the fuss over the achievement of Terry Venables' team in so narrowly failing to reach the final, what about the winners?

To my mind Germany did not get anywhere near the credit they deserved, given the fact that it was probably the weakest squad they have produced for years. Added to which, Bertie Vogts, the German coach, had to carry a horrendous injury crisis even before they arrived here.

Yes, Euro 96 was a great spectacle, and our boys did superbly, but just as all the flag-waving was finished and Trafalgar Square eventually emptied, so the old Luftwaffe

Tri-star was once again touching down with the spoils safely locked aboard.

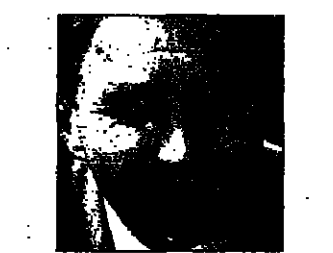
Nevertheless, lucky or not, the Germans did it again. As Gary Player said: "The more I practise the luckier I get." And from all I hear, they do love to practice. Obviously you can't believe everything you hear, but on this occasion, my source is impeccable.

Colin Bell - not he of Maine Road fame - was an apprentice and then a professional footballer who never quite made the grade at Leicester City. In 1982, when he was 21 and anxious to play football anywhere, he was released on a free transfer.

Anywhere just happened to be Germany and he eventually finished up at Koblenz, who were then a lower division outfit. Eight

years on and all of 30 years old, he became player-manager at Koblenz. Since then he has taken them through the lower leagues to the German Second Division and established himself as one of the brightest young managers working there.

In the eight years in question he has also had to get himself qualified to work as a manager. What is the alternative to qualification in Germany? There isn't one, unless you are Kaiser Franz. Apparently, Beckenbauer's honorary exception was enthusiastically greeted by German coaches. They reckoned he still had to get results and, they argue, he did: he went on and won the World Cup. Colin Bell would argue that the management and coaching system helped him, and helped the players to pocket yet another World Cup trophy.



HOWARD WILKINSON

"Tautonic thoroughness" is no cliché as far as aspiring managers are concerned. The "B" licence involves a three-week course and allows you to coach up to the German Fourth Division. Acquiring an "A" licence takes a little longer; mind you it does entitle you to manage up to the lofty heights of the Zweite Liga (Second Division), provided you have had at least two years' practical experience after acquiring your "B" licence.

Then comes the "biggy", the manager's licence. This must come at the end of a course lasting at least 10 or 12 weeks, mustn't it? Brace yourselves: to earn the licence you must complete a seven-month full-time course at the Sports University in Cologne. Students are allowed back to their clubs at weekends and there is also a seven-week attachment to a Bundesliga club.

But does it all matter, all this theory and education? Historical facts are not theory, they argue. Germany are the most successful international country in Europe, if not the world.

All of which is very different to our so-called "professionalism". Germany recognises the absolute vi-

tal necessity to get it right between the ages of eight and 21. If we are to capitalise on the current boom here, then we must do likewise. Anybody can learn to coach, but coaching of our most valuable assets should not be available to just anybody. We wouldn't let it happen at school, would we?

Is there a secret to Germany's success? Is it a mystery known only to them? Have the Norwegians and the Dutch infiltrated and nicked information they shouldn't be privy to?

Apparently not. The German football nation, perhaps the German sporting nation, has a "coaching mentality", and that by definition means a practising mentality. Excellence is a fact not a figment of misguided thinking.

The bigger the club, the more coaches they employ. Bayern Mu-

nich, for instance, would seek to employ more manager's licence holders than anyone else. They want their players at all ages and all levels to have the best available. Players from Kinder to Klinsmann view coaches as professionals due professional respect. As a percentage of the population, Germany has probably double the amount of players registered that we have. The clubs are the focal point of learning and teaching.

Colin Bell is convinced the key factor in Germany's continued success is the quality and thoroughness of the coaches privileged to work under licence. The players get the best coaches and the best practice and they reckon the more they practise the luckier they get. That's their story, anyway, and they are sticking to it.

Men of letters court chance to pool their wits

Greg Wood sees darts continue its emergence from the gloom of the late Eighties in the emotional atmosphere of an Essex night-club



Dennis Priestley shows his menace in the WDC World Championships at the Circus Tavern, Purfleet, yesterday

Photograph: Peter Jay

It was shortly after 1.00pm and Dennis "The Menace" Priestley was ready to make his entrance into the Circus Tavern for the first match of the day in the WDC World Darts Championship, but something was not quite right. Despite the best endeavours of several smoke machines, not to mention the substantial puffing majority in the audience, you could still see the board, so a man with a mobile fog-generator - who was clearly being paid by the cough - was dispatched to add a final cloud or three. By the time he had finished, visibility was down to six inches. At last, somewhere to the left of the acid fogbank, the stage was set, for darts Sky-style.

And that, it must be said, is the only style worth bothering with. In each of the four years since the WDC breakaway, the presentation at the Purfleet venue has grown a little more garish, but it is none the worse for that. When darts fell into a late-80s slump even more drastic than the one in the housing market, the big names felt a new ruling body was the only answer,

and now their decision appears to be paying off.

After lagging behind the prize-money on offer in the other world championship, the Embassy event at Frimley Green, the WDC tournament now offers £45,000 to the winner, the largest prize in darts. The formula - gladiatorial entrances, young women in swimsuits, bright lights and thumping disco beats - might not appeal to the old-timers in the snug of the Ferret and Trouser-Leg, but darts, you feel, is finally on the way back.

And it has much to offer, not least a degree of audience participation which few other sports would encourage in these nervous times. Spectators are encouraged to line the route to the stage, exchanging handshakes and backslaps with their favourites, while the kids puck-

er up in the hope of a kiss, cheerfully unaware that, if they breathe in at the wrong moment, it will probably leave them both drunk and choking. It is rather difficult to imagine Nick Faldo indulging in similar pleasures on the first tee at St Andrews.

Priestley's route yesterday was relatively trouble-free, but such was the crush when Eric Bristow appeared the previous evening that it seemed odds-against him even making it to the oche. Lucky for him, the cynics would have said beforehand, such has been Bristow's decline from the mid-80s heyday when he was all but unbeatable and one of the best-known faces in Britain.

Yet despite setting out as a 150-1 chance to win the tournament, the "Crazy Cockney" swept past Bob Anderson, the

No 3 seed, finishing the final leg from 276 with four straight trebles-20s and double 18. It was as if he had never been away, and at the final double, the Tavern descended into ecstatic bedlam.

But as even Bristow later admitted, "you can't have two world championships in any sport", and indeed, the plague of acronyms which has infested darts as thoroughly as it has boxing may at last be responding to treatment. The British Darts Organisation, which banned the renegade players from all its "open" events four years ago, is on the receiving end of a World Darts Council writ alleging restraint of trade which, after a delay of almost two years, will finally reach a court in June. Close observers of darts politics feel that a reconciliation between the two or-

ganisations is as inevitable as it is overdue.

What is certain, though, is that no matter how the sport arranges itself in the coming months, Priestley, who made impressively short work of Steve Brown yesterday, and Phil Taylor, who he is seeded to meet in Sunday's final, are the finest two players in the world, and have been throughout the 90s. Their rivalry, which must be among the most enduring in any sport, is a friendly one, but there is an added edge this year, as Taylor attempts to equal Bristow's record of five world titles.

"If he plays very well and beats me, and I don't play really badly, then I'm happy, and I sure it's the same for him," Priestley says. "It's a matter of putting pressure on at the right time. You can score well and

then miss a double and then suddenly he'll get a 156 out-shot and you're left regretting it all. Last year in the final I played excellent darts and it wasn't enough, but maybe if we get there this year, the pressure of going for three in a row will get to him a little."

But even another classic like their match 12 months ago will not shift the prejudice which still persists in some areas of the British sporting audience. "There are obviously some people here who look at darts and see cloth caps," Priestley says, "but if you go to America or Australia it doesn't have that stigma, and you find that there are lawyers and doctors playing."

Whether the doctors would approve of the smoke machines, of course, is another matter entirely.

Wiseman's seasonal message

Football
GLENN MOORE

Everybody is at it these days, John Major, Tony Blair, Paddy Ashdown... Keith Wiseman. Who? The new chairman of the Football Association and the only one of the aforementioned quartet to already have his election in the bag.

Wiseman joined the politicians in sending out a new year message. This is one of the FA's modern traditions (you can tell it is modern as it is not yet sponsored) and was last year used as a chance for Sir Bert Millichip, Wiseman's predecessor, to offer a sprig of mistletoe to the rebellious barons of the Premiership.

As Wiseman was elected from the ranks of the Premiership (though not by all of them) he is able to write from a position of relative authority on the need to "balance the demands of the different sections of the game in the interests of football as a whole".

He adds: "I am committed to a new partnership at the heart of our football between those who run the professional game and those who administer grassroots football."

"The best structure for our domestic game; our relations with European football; the de-

velopment of the game at the grassroots will surely be among the early subjects I will be discussing with colleagues in 1997."

Wiseman then stresses that "the top clubs have a huge part to play" in helping England qualify for the next World Cup adding "we will seek to ensure we are at one with them on the key issues".

Wiseman also draws attention to the FA's successful running of Euro 96 and its bid for the 2006 World Cup; its pleasure at the decision to turn Wembley into the new National Stadium; and its desire to increase Asian participation in the game and address the role of new technology - "its use, and misuse".

The letter is formally sent to the 89 members of the FA Council which may be why it contains no mention of plans for structural reform of the unwieldy and anachronistic Council itself (one member each for the Army, RAF, Royal Navy, Oxford University, Cambridge University, Independent Schools, New Zealand FA and Australia, but no member for the Vauxhall Conference or football supporters, one for women's football).

As they put it alongside the Queen's congratulatory telegram on the mantelpiece the councilors may reflect that one set of turkeys cannot survive Christmas.

Leeds' double signing

Rugby League

Leeds Rhinos yesterday filled the two remaining places on their overseas quota by bringing the highly rated Australian pair, Martin Masella and Wayne Collins, to the Super League.

Masella, a prop forward who has played for Illawarra, Balmain and South Sydney, represented Tonga in last year's World Cup. He was originally recommended to Leeds by Mike McClelland, the former St

Helens coach who was in charge of the Tongan national side.

Collins, a former St George and South Queensland Crushers hooker, was a member of the Canberra Raiders squad beaten 30-18 by Widnes in the World Club Challenge at Old Trafford in 1989.

Wayne Fisher, who guided Doncaster to the top flight two years ago, has been appointed as coach by the second division club for the second time. He replaces the Australian Peter Regan, who moved to Batley in October.

SPORTING DIGEST

American football
NFL: New York Giants 27 Philadelphia 14; San Francisco 14 Philadelphia 0.

Baseball
Working Bears will be without their American forward James Hamilton, the leading rebounder in the Budweiser League at 11.5 per game, for at least three weeks because of an ankle injury.

SWISSER LEAGUE Chelsea 102 Bournemouth 75; Manchester United 63 Derby 62; Sheffield Wednesday 79 Plymouth 40; Leeds 88; Fulham 65; Birmingham 60; Tottenham 57.

NBA: New Jersey 110 Indiana 102; Charlotte 94 Milwaukee 84; LA Lakers 115 Philadelphia 102; Portland 110 San Antonio 86.

Cricket
TEST MATCHES (Durban, 2nd day): Natal 288 (103.65 overs), India 228 (101.25 overs). Natal won by 60 runs. (Durban, 3rd day): Natal 288 (103.65 overs), India 228 (101.25 overs). Natal won by 60 runs.

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Ice hockey
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Football
Brian Kerr, the manager of the League of Ireland club St Patrick's, has been appointed full-time manager of the Republic of Ireland Under-18 and Under-16 squads on a four-year contract. He takes up his post on 1 February.

Baseball
The last 10,000 tickets for England's World Cup qualifier with Italy on 12 February will go on sale on Thursday from 9am for telephone callers only via the Wembley box office. No tickets are available to people who travel in person to Wembley.

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Simon Beards, the 24-year-old centre from Leicester Tigers, yesterday joined the Courage League Two club Nottingham.

Sailing
The road to Sydney 2000 started with a win at Spain's Palma Regatta in the Laser Class yesterday for British 1996 silver medalist Ben Ainslie, with another Briton, Iain Perry, in second place.

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Golding crawls to glory

Sailing

After making little or no progress for 12 hours, Mike Golding yesterday added a win in the second leg of the BT Challenge to the one he notched up on the first leg from Southampton, writes Stuart Alexander.

At the end of 6,600 miles from Rio de Janeiro to Wellington, Golding's Group 4 ran into light airs and what had been a substantial lead was cut to two hours and 52 minutes as Andy Hindley (Save the Children) closed in. Simon Walker (Toshiba) crossed third, 16hr 20min 11sec behind Golding, with Mark Lodge (Motorola) the only other yacht expected to finish last night.

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sport

Professionalism hit British rugby this year, bringing internecine warfare, a Test epidemic and an invasion of foreign players. **Chris Hewett** says the game must move forward in 1997 to survive

Goose that laid the powder keg

Rugby's golden goose has proved an elusive creature in 1996, a survival specialist with an instinct for self-preservation far more acute than anything displayed by Gerad Davies or David Campese in their heydays. It has been hunted relentlessly by o-solescent committee men, cheque book-wielding business barons and avaricious players who appear to have studied economics under Walter Mitty. Formidable enemies indeed, yet the goose continues to draw breath.

But for how much longer? It is astonishing that domestic rugby still basks in the warm glow of an unprecedented boom in popularity given the best efforts of those at the summit of the British game and the English one in particular – to dash it to smithereens on the twin altars of petty power-mongering and grotesque greed.

Even now, England's senior clubs are girding their loins for a fierce argument with the Rugby Football Union over the Courage League structure – not next season's structure, mark you, but this season's. The First Division protectionists want a 12-team top flight with two relegation slots while the governing body is pushing a 10-team arrangement under which no fewer than four clubs would wave good-bye to their precious elite status.

When the rival battalions finally strike a formal deal on the financial and broadcasting disputes that have dominated the headlines for 12 long months – the so-called negotiators from both sides hope to settle in January, although no one is prepared to say which January – the relegation issue will still be there, bubbling away underneath a facade of good fellowship and reconciliation.

Yet the real threat to rugby's development as a major spectator sport is overkill on the international stage. This is not a little local difficulty, like the RFU-Epruc (English Professional Rugby Union Clubs) rumour in England, but a worldwide epidemic. So many Test matches are scheduled to be played in 1997 that there is a serious danger of reducing to nothing the sense of occasion that has always been the single most important foundation stone of the sport's mass appeal. Ridiculously, the International Board has sanctioned no fewer than 46 full Tests involving the traditional Big Eight nations – the four home countries, France, New Zealand, South Africa and Australia – during the coming calendar year, and at least two other key positions – middle jumper and open-side flanker, the choice is very nearly as limited. On an average

each and every weekend, enough to sap the interest levels of the most fanatical rugby follower.

It does not end there. When you include the stronger second division countries in this morass of activity – Canada, Argentina, Italy and the Pacific Islands – the total number of matches approaches the 70 mark. Suddenly the golden goose begins to resemble one of those force-fed unfortunates on the farms of southern France.

England, alone, will play Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and New Zealand again on successive Saturdays between 15 November and 6 December, a fact that has stirred up a degree of renewed hostility from fellow members of the Five Nations committee who have yet to forgive Twickenham fully for its self-serving duplicity in negotiating a unilateral broadcasting deal last April.

Jack Rowell, the national coach, repeatedly insists that if his side is to mount a meaningful challenge to the superpowers of the southern hemisphere, it needs to play them on a regular basis. Is four times in four weeks regular enough for you, Jack?

The pitfalls of excess were nakedly apparent as recently as last month, when Scotland failed lamentably to sell out Murrayfield for the visit of John Eales and his Wallabies. Even more disturbingly, the Welsh fell

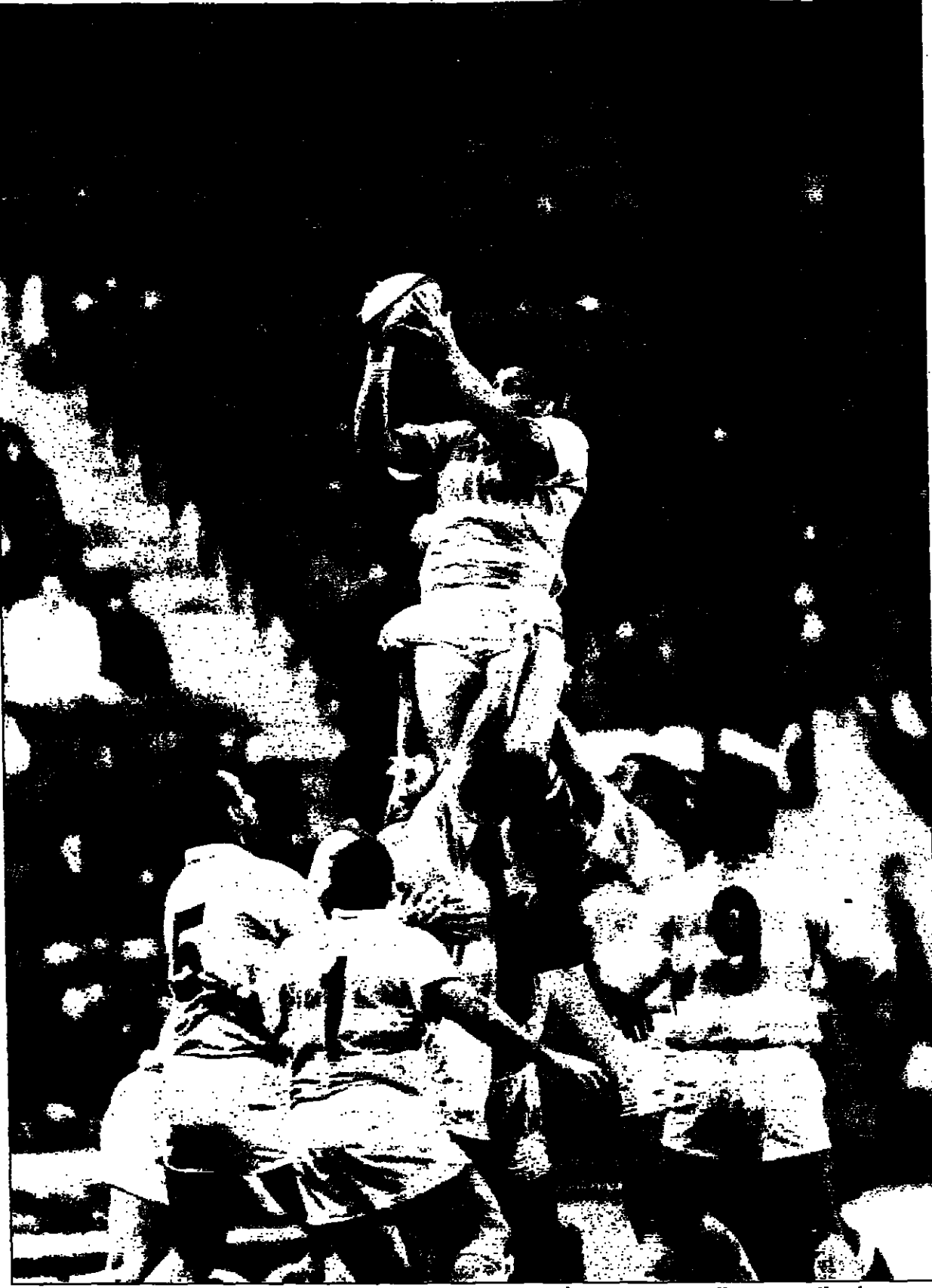
short of full houses at the Arms Park for both the Test with the Aussies – the game in which the home-grown hero Jonathan Davies returned to international colours – and the match against South Africa, one of the two most marketable outfits on the planet.

Quite how many pitch up at Cardiff for next week's match with the United States is anyone's guess but few are likely to be knocked unconscious in the box office frenzy.

Global village culture is much in evidence at club level, too, as Rowell is finding to his cost as he searches high and low for English-qualified talent.

It is a well-documented fact that the outside-half cupboard is virtually bare: of the 12 first-choice stand-offs in the First Division, only five are available for red rose selection (and one of those, Mike Catt of Bath, is a South African by birth). Given that Leicester and Harlequins are about to draft in Joel Stranisky, a Springbok, and Thierry Lacroix, a Frenchman, respectively, the options will soon decrease by another 40 per cent.

Further examination reveals that at least two other key positions – middle jumper and open-side flanker, the choice is very nearly as limited. On an average



Empty seats at Twickenham, during England's Test against Argentina earlier this month, suggest the dangers of overkill for spectators already with us in the expansion of international competition Photograph: David Ashdown

game here is flourishing under the demands of professionalism. Rugby is more popular in London and the Midlands than ever before – just look at the crowds at The Stoop, Loftus Road, Welford Road and Franklin's Gardens – while Newcastle, bankrolled by Sir John Hall but made flesh with impressive single-mindedness by Rob Andrew, are emerging as a real power in the land.

With Sale also cutting plenty of ice on the other side of the Pennines, the northern out-

look is brighter than many feared when salary packets first replaced boot money. As in all business ventures, quality control is of paramount importance: for instance, the Heineken European Cup, the wild success story of the season, requires careful nurturing while, conversely, the almost unimaginably pointless Anglo-Welsh tournament deserves a thorough soaking with weedkiller. It is of no conceivable use to anyone, so get rid of it.

This has been a bitterly frus-

trating year of wasted opportunities, undermined by bad faith and endless procrastination. In 1997 British rugby needs to break the logjam with sharp minds, quick wits and, above all, an injection of energy.

If that proves beyond the badged and blazered buffers of the four home unions, sack the load of them and headhunt a couple of old All Blacks to run the show. If we are going to take up residence in the global village, let's make it work for us rather than against us.

...fears of ...

The coach

BOB DWYER – Australian World Cup-winning coach, now at league leaders Leicester.

"I've spent just half the season in English rugby but I believe the biggest problem is that the demands on players in the professional era are nowhere near big enough. If you're being paid £70,000 for a season's performance for England, you should be in tip-top shape, but it strikes me that some of those at the most lucrative end of the game are well short of that. My other concern is that people here misunderstand how good a player needs to be to perform effectively at Test level; some of the current England squad are not within close, as we say back home. The sound assessment of talent is absolutely essential in the development of a strong national side, as is mental and physical conditioning. If you get that right, you will go a long way because everything else is here on your doorstep – when I was a young coach, England was a citadel of physical education. You have heaps of information at your fingertips, but you really have to improve the application of that information."

The fan

MARTIN GOULD – Wasps supporter.

"My main concerns about the game in England are twofold; that the influx of foreign players while very exciting for the supporter, is beginning to have a negative effect on the development of our own youngsters and that the paying spectator is taking far too much of a hiding in the pocket."

On the first point, my own club much shoulder a share of the blame like every other – we have two Scots in our second row, a Westam Samson – and a Canadian in our back division. At the start of the season, Alex King couldn't get a game at outside-half because Gareth Rees had been brought in. Had it not been for early injuries, Alex might not be in the England squad now. The obsession with expensive imports is dangerous and limits will have to be imposed. From the supporter's point of view, £15 at the turnstiles is hitting us hard. Soccer fans may be used to paying that sort of money but the sudden leap in prices to finance players' inflated wage bills really does stick in the craw."

The player

ION GALLARD – Bath and England full-back.

"The obvious source of discomfort at the way our game is going is the influx of foreign talent. I am perfectly aware of its short-term value – players like Michael Lynagh, Joel Stranisky and Inge Jorgensen and the rest can only raise the profile of domestic rugby – and if that brings new supporters through the turnstiles, all well and good."

But in the long term, what good will it do us as a rugby-playing nation? Very little, I'm afraid. There is an awful lot of home-grown talent out there that needs to be developed and exposure at the top level is the key element in that. It would be self-defeating if good young players were forced to perform at a lower level – or give up the game altogether – because their progress was being blocked by big names from overseas."

On another note, I would like to see us experiment with two referees as a means of cracking down on offences like offside and killing the ball. It is still too easy for one side to play entirely negatively and get away with it."

The administrator

MIKE SMITH – chief executive, Saracens.

"The first thing we have to do to ensure our future is forget our immediate past. We have to put last year's in-fighting behind us, encourage the personalities involved to draw a line under the conflict and get on with building up for the Five Nations and, in the longer term, the 1999 World Cup."

The public perception of rugby was sky high until this season, and I think the difficulties between the clubs and the Rugby Football Union has affected gates both at domestic and international level. We cannot allow that situation to continue."

Unfortunately, the RFU and the clubs have been trying to run two separate businesses with the same raw materials in terms of players. Both sides need to maximise their earning potential but instead of agreeing a common approach, there has been division. We are now in the world of entertainment and many clubs, Saracens included, have taken that on board by improving facilities for players and supporters alike. It is all about developing the product and for that to happen, everyone must pull in the same direction."

What a gamble, what a lottery, what a farce!

The last four months have seen the biggest changes in rugby I have known. Some of them have been both exciting and overdue: others neither. But what has become apparent with every Saturday afternoon is that not only the quality but the very nature of the game depends on the referee. It is his interpretation of the laws, as they are called in England – the rules, almost everywhere else – which determines what happens on the field.

So far, so obvious, you may say dismissively. But it is not obvious at all when you come to think about it. Thus football is a simple game, which is why it is so popular, whose only complicated area is the application of the offside rule. Here the referee has two qualified linesmen

virtually to apply it on his behalf. Tennis is even simpler, where the only difficulty lies in judging whether the ball was inside, on or outside a white line. Here electronic devices have come to the aid of the umpires. Cricket, to be sure, is more complicated. In a scholarship examination which I sat at 18 I had (in a question I chose voluntarily) to explain it to a foreigner. I was sorry I tried. But though the rules are complex, they are coherent and comprehensible. There are few areas of latitude: such as what is "unfair play". The principal difficulty is to establish what happened. Accordingly additional officials have been introduced to help the umpires.

Rugby is different. There is no agreement about what the rules

mean or how they should be applied. Brian Moore would not have been sent off for raking or stamping if he had been playing for Auckland against Canterbury rather than for Richmond against Sale.

European, certainly British Isles, referees take a different view. They will not permit an attacking player to move a defending player with his boot in an attempt to get at the ball. The most they are prepared to allow is a penalty to the attacking side. But this is frequently unjust.

Consider: a player is tackled but the tackler fails to "turn" him. The tackled player, by this time on the ground, legitimately tries to make the ball available to his own side. Forwards pile in from both teams. In these circumstances, which we see



ALAN WATKINS

repeated every five minutes every Saturday, there cannot logically be a "right" or a "wrong" side of the ball. From the point of view of the tackled player's team, he is on the right side; from that of the tackler's team, on the wrong.

As I have said, the referee may

award a penalty to the tackler's team. But he has, in theory anyway, an entirely different option. The tackled player has simply tried to make the ball available to his own team. The ball is on the ground. It is being contested by both packs. It is accordingly a ruck. The referee can blow up and award the put-in at the resulting scrum to the team who took the ball into the ruck, the tackled player's team: for it cannot be the other one.

If, however, the ball has failed to touch the deck, the ensuing mêlée counts as a maul, where, if the ball fails to emerge, the referee awards the put-in against the team adjudged to have taken the ball in.

What a gamble, what a lottery, what a farce! Is it any wonder that experienced television commentators, sometimes former internationals themselves, are often at a loss to explain why a particular decision has been made, even though they are assisted by television in the commentary box?

A few weeks ago I was watching Bath play Harlequins at the Rec and standing behind Stuart Barnes, who was doing his stuff as a summariser for Sky TV. A player was penalised for lying on the ground and not getting out of the way. Barnes said, entirely justly, that he did not see what else the chap could do in the circumstances. If someone as experienced in the modern game as Barnes can be puzzled, what hope is there for the rest of us?

I could mention other matters: the toleration of the crooked feed; the modern English fashion for awarding ridiculous penalty tries which now spread to Wales; the new ambivalence about what is and is not a dangerous tackle. But the real trouble remains with "over the top" "not releasing" and the rest of it. For a start I would, first, abolish the distinction between ruck and maul and, second, always award the put-in to the advancing side.

I apologise for the mysterious misspelling of Stradey Park in last week's column. I am now off to pay my annual pilgrimage to the grave of William Webb Ellis in Meriton, and shall (DV) be back on Tuesday 21 January. A Happy New Year to all my readers.

East women win seventh title

Hockey
BILL COLWILL

East duly claimed their seventh Women's Under-21 Territorial title at the Milton Keynes National Stadium yesterday, but not before they suffered a few shocks from an entertaining West side in their 2-2 draw.

When Kerry Moore scored East's second goal 10 minutes into the second half, after Sarah Marsh had given them a 1-0 interval lead, a win seemed certain. But two goals by West in three minutes midway through the half ensured a tight finish, with a disorganised East desperately hanging on at the end.

picked up a poor clearance from the East captain, Canterbury's Melanie Clewlow, to run 50 yards through the East defence to score a fine goal, and then Jenna Martin struck a sweetly timed penalty corner to equalise.

Careless defending by East gave West another couple of chances to snatch the game before the final whistle. The draw was enough to give West the overall win in the tournament – now into its 12th year – over South.

The Welsh international Louise Bevan scored in each half as South beat North, 2-0. Both goals came from follow-ups of two of South's 16 penalty-corner attempts. Midlands, last year's champions, came

from behind to beat West, 2-1, in the last match of the day, with two goals in the last three minutes. Karen Heckley had put West ahead after 17 minutes after good work down the right by Jenna Martin.

West, playing their second match of the day, tried to defend their narrow lead and all but did it thanks to a string of outstanding saves from their goalkeeper Rachael Cleave before Jennie Blinson and Natalie Hannah converted the late chances, both of which were set up by Lucilla Wright.

In the Under-18 tournament at the Milton Keynes club, East won the title from North, with the Midlands claiming the Under-16 title from East.

Panthers help Devils

Ice hockey

Rejuvenated Nottingham Panthers prevented Newcastle Cobras from closing the gap on the Superleague leaders, Cardiff Devils, with a 9-5 win on Sunday.

Cobras, hiding to make up ground on Devils and second-placed Sheffield Steelers, took the lead in the first minute. But they were out of the game by the 40-minute mark, when they trailed 7-2. Marty Dallman's first hat-trick for Panthers was the main talking point, although the prolific Paul Adey weighed in with a treble himself.

The win made up for Saturday's disappointment as Nottingham were beaten for the first

time since winning the Benson and Hedges Cup. Trailing 2-0 at Sheffield, they scored twice in the last three minutes through Adey and Jason Jennings, only to lose to an overtime goal from Nicky Chinn.

The result enabled Sheffield to close the gap on Cardiff to three points.

The son of the widely travelled football goalkeeper John Burridge is carving out a sporting career for himself as an ice hockey player with the Blackburn Hawks. Tom Burridge scored two goals in Sunday's Northern Premier League game at Whiteley Warriors which earned his mid-table team a 5-4 victory. Burridge was named man of the match.

Steelers make stunning drive

American football

The San Francisco 49ers shut out the Philadelphia Eagles 14-0 and the Pittsburgh Steelers steamrollered the Indianapolis Colts in the second half of what ended up as a 42-14 rout in the NFL play-offs.

The 49ers' Steve Young ran for a touchdown and overcame a rib injury to throw for the other in the NFC wild-card game at 3COM Park on Sunday, while the Steelers' Jerome Bettis ran for 102 yards and two one-yard scores in the AFC wild-card game at Three Rivers Stadium.

The Steelers outplayed the Colts in Pittsburgh but only made sure of facing the New

England Patriots in next week's divisional play-offs with a 29-point second half. Indianapolis struggled in the first half, too, but the Steelers' starting quarterback Mike Tomczak threw two interceptions, one resulting in a 59-yard touchdown return by Eugene Daniel and the other leading to a TD.

Bettis' first scoring plunge and Kordell Stewart's two-point conversion pass in the third quarter gave Pittsburgh the lead for good, 21-14, after a 16-play, 91-yard march that devoured the first 9:30 of the second half. Bettis carried seven times for 38 yards on the drive. "I don't know if I've seen a drive that took up that much time that was executed that well," the Steelers

coach, Bill Cowher, said. Bettis ran in from a yard out again to make it 28-14 just 39 seconds into the fourth quarter.

Young was the 49ers' leading rusher with 67 yards on 12 carries as the 49ers secured a trip to Green Bay for next weekend's divisional play-offs. He scored on a nine-yard quarterback draw early in the second quarter, but suffered bruised ribs and was forced to leave the field briefly after bouncing off two Eagles defenders into the end zone.

Early in the third quarter, Young hurled a 36-yard pass to Jerry Rice, who made the Eagles three-yard line. On the next play, Young and Rice hooked up again for a touchdown to make it 14-0.

A chance to see just why The Rolling Stones might once just have been "the greatest rock 'n' roll band in the world". Certainly this footage from 1968, since suppressed by Mick Jagger, shows the Stones dating better than any of their guests: Eric Burdon & The Animals, The Who and - oh lordy - Taj Mahal, while, if you like this sort of thing, we get the sight of Eric Clapton, Keith Richards and Yoko Ono jamming together as "The Dirty Mac".



Shadowlands
8.00pm BBC1 (not Scotland)

"The butler from *Remains of the Day* promoted to a don" was one wry observation of Sir Anthony Hopkins' performance as CS Lewis in Richard Attenborough's polished screen adaptation of William Nicholson's wonderful play. Sir Anthony, of course, was born to play frigid individuals shyly blossoming – and in this case the donnish Lewis slowly begins to thaw under the attention of American poet Joy Gresham, here played by Debra Winger.

BBC 1

BBC 2

ITV London

Channel 4

ITV/Regions

- 7.00 News; Local News and Weather (2408073). *
7.10 J. J. 90 (7305580). 7.35 The Big World of Richard Scary (R) (S) (1627257). 8.00 News; Regional News and Weather (5066412). *
- 8.10 Children's BBC: Barney. 8.15 Peter Pan and the Pirates. * 8.35 The Legend of Prince Valiant. *
- 9.00 News; Regional News and Weather (3605764). *
- 9.05 Children's BBC: Incredible Games. 9.35 Sweet Valley High. 9.55 The Little Polar Bear. 10.00 Playdays. 10.20 Williams' Wild Westings.
- 10.30 ~~SNOW~~ Snowball Express (Norman Tokar 1972 US). New. Snowball Express is a cartoon about a snowman who takes his train to work. Snowball's train abandons the rat race after his uncle bequeathed him a rundown hotel in the Colorado Rockies. Dial 'D' for Disney (2387702).
- 12.05 The Muppets (4992126). 12.30 Wipeout (31851). 1.00 News; Weather (91433528). *
1.13 Local News and Weather (82642122). 1.15 Neighbours (58612948). 1.35 The World's Strongest Man 1996 (5741509). *
- 2.10 ~~SNOW~~ Problem Child (Dennis Dugan 1990 US). Small-town couple John Ritter and Amy Poehler are home and doing good. Problem Child's captives are a kidnapping ring (Michael Oliver) is actually an uncontrollable delinquent (7164696). *
- 3.20 ~~SNOW~~ Star Trek Vi: The Undiscovered Country (Nicholas Meyer 1991 US). The sixth and final big-screen sci-fi adventure featuring the crew of the original TV series see Captain Kirk (William Shatner) put on trial for firing at a Klingon vessel during peace negotiations (S) (19094696). *
- 5.05 Neighbours (S) (8970528). *
- 5.30 News and Weather (349621). *
- 5.45 Regional News Magazine (382832). *
- 6.00 The World's Strongest Man (S) (45870). *
- 7.00 Only Fools and Horses: Selection Box. The sitcom hosts with David Baddiel, Rodney and Uncle Albert looking back over their 15-year run (S) (63344). *
- 7.30 EastEnders. Nigel makes an important announcement, while Tiffany plays her cards close to her chest. But how close is that? (S) (238). *
- 8.00 ~~SNOW~~ Showdowns (Richard Attenborough 1993 UK). See *Field of the Day* (S) (83227967). *
- 10.05 News; Regional News and Weather (469702). *
- 10.25 The Adventures of Marmaduke and Wise. Some of their funniest moments (R) (350528). *
- 11.00 The End of the Year Show Angus Deayton presents an irreverent view of the year's events, with guests Julian Clary, David Baddiel, Lee Hurst and The Spice Girls (S) (220967). *
- 12.05 Hogmanay Live. Carol Smilie and Gordon Kennedy join in the festivities at the Great Hall in Edinburgh Castle (2360246). *
- 1.00 Happy Feet. The New Year of Canterbury sends his greetings (S) (5043062). *
- 1.05 ~~SNOW~~ Carol on Girls (Gerald Thomas 1973 UK). Sid James persuades his local council to hold a beauty contest. Enter outraged feminists with sabotage in mind (S) (312807). *
- 2.30 Weather (8182831). To 2.35am.

- 7.30 **The Phil Squires Show** (R) (1626528). 7.55
Guest: Cagney: Top of the World (R) (5022899).
- 8.45 **1938 All Stars** (M) (404120). *
 1938 USL. Childhood friends James Cagney and
 Pat O'Brien grow up to become gangster and priest
 respectively (74098899).
- 10.20 **Eisenhower, Statesman** (R) (375493).
- 11.45 **The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures. Fossils
 and evolution, continued** (S) (278528).
- 12.45 **Clash of the Titans. The 1988 FA Cup final
 between Liverpool and Wimbledon** (R) (S)
 (331212).
- 1.25 **The Essential Olympics** (S) (3048180). *
- 2.40 **More Secret Gardens. Edge Hill in Gwent, Wales**
 (R) (3479344).
- 2.50 **Great Railway Journeys. Clive Anderson travels
 from Hong Kong to Ulan Bator** (R) (7350702).
- 3.45 **Love on a Branch Line. 2/4. Continuing the John
 Hadfield adaptation, starring Michael Maloney and
 Leslie Phillips** (R) (S) (6361696). *
- 4.35 **1951 All Stars. Minnelli's sparkling, Oscar-baden
 musical too good for words for some time, but its
 sheer ambition is belied by glorious lead and the
 two winning leads - Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron.
 There's a ballet - and there are scenes in the style
 of Dufy, Renoir, Utrillo, Rousseau, Van Gogh and
 Toulouse-Lautrec. There are also a top-notch
 Gershwin score (including "Embraceable You" and
 "S Wonderful"). Book the sofa (84875948).**
- 6.25 **Shadow the Peregrine. A year in the life of a female
 peregrine** (S) (953696). *
- 7.15 **Who Could Ask for Anything More? A concert
 celebration of the lyrical genius of Ira Gershwin at
 the Royal Albert Hall** (S) (R1964493).
- 8.50 **Tap Dogs. Choreographer Dein Ferry and director
 Nigel Haffenden up with the top male Australian
 tap dancers, outfit with the world's top performing
 cat. The catchphrase is "sissieszone" (906677).**
- 9.45 **Sieghed and Roy. Meet the magician duo, who
 have been described as the "Liberace of Magic"
 and whose shows in Las Vegas are sold out months
 in advance. The programme explores their stage
 act and fantastic home life - (which they share with
 a pair of rare white tiger sisters) (808580).**
- 10.25 **Burn Your Phone. Drama about a stressed-out
 telephone operator who reaches the end of his
 tether when plagued by a series of nuisance calls.
 Alan Cummings stars** (S) (438832). *
- 0.50 **The Rolling Stones' Rock and Roll Circus. See
 Pick of the Day** (S) (1456898).
- 2.00 **Jools' Hootenanny. With Paul Weller, Mick
 Hucknall and Simply Red, the Lighthouse Family
 and the Magic Street Presses** (S) (5387371).
- 1.25 **Elvis. The 1968 Comeback Special. Footage of
 Elvis' final appearance for almost a decade,
 when, with a truly electrifying performance of
 nearly 30 of his best known hits, he gave one of
 the greatest shows of his career** (R) (9207807).
- 2.45 **Weather** (847911). To 2.50am.

- 6.00 **GMTV (7390141)**. 9.25 **Santo Bugito (S)** (2235412). 9.50 **Step by Step (R)** (S) (22353509). 10.20 **News (S)** (811122).
10.25 **London (S)** (2235363).
10.30 **Return to Snowy River II (S)** Geoff Burrows (1988 AUS). **Starring** Tom Burlinson, Sigrid Thornton and Brian Dennehy (S) (60137561).
12.20 **You Shout (S)** (5571275). 12.25 **London Today (79127136)**. * 12.30 **ITN Lunchtime News (S)** (2393986). 12.55 **London Today (9108677)**. *
1.25 **News Beyond the Poseidon Adventure (Irwin Allen 1979 US)**. **Michael Caine** and **Telly Savalas** star in this sequel to the disaster movie as rival leaders on a salvage mission to locate the capsized passenger liner (28977493). *
3.30 **News (1617054)**. 3.35 **London Today (1616325)**. 3.40 **Cartoon Time (6708293)**. 3.55 **Body Heat Celebrity Special (S)** (5570035). *
4.40 **Home and Away Special (R)** (S) (1276141).
5.10 **After the News. News quiz (S)** (7787509).
5.40 **News. Weather (318257)**. *
5.55 **You Shout (239702)**.
6.00 **London Tonight (Followed by Weather) (870)**. *
6.30 **London Today (S)** (2235363).
7.00 **Emmerdale. Frank Tate is pushed too far (S)** (7142). *
7.30 **Tad.** Second of these tacky programmes in which a camera is concealed in the back of a London cab. Welcome to the future of TV (306). *
8.00 **The Bill.** Drug overdose grief (7832). *
8.30 **Cuts.** Adapted by David Nobbs from Malcolm Bradbury's comic novel, this is satire – of media folk – of the cosiest order, and the sort of obvious casting that makes you wonder why anyone bothers with casting directors. Peter Davison is a mild-mannered lecturer-cum-obscure novelist who's asked to pen an epic drama serial by the powerful and corrupt British Independent TV company (Timothy West) (S) (12870). *
10.00 **News. Weather (739073)**. *
10.15 **The Bob Downie Special** The Australian comedian plus guests **Ant and Dec**, **Anthony Newley** and **EastEnders** **Martine McCutcheon** (853734). *
11.15 **News The Golden Child (Michael Ritchie 1986 US)**. The sort of trope that sent **Eddie Murphy** careering earthwards. He plays a Los Angeles social worker who is reluctantly employed by wizened oriental sages to locate a mystical youth with the power to bring peace to mankind (S) (5508986). *
11.55 **New Year Belles.** Trevor McDonald joins **Hogmanay** revellers at Scotland's **Scots Palace** (925986).
1.05 **News The Golden Child (S)** (938557). *
2.10 **News Repeat/Alfred Hitchcock 1969 US).** Hitch's **Elton** features a finer-than-fine spy yarn about Cuban rightists. **Franco** government agents and John Ford. He'd clearly lost his touch at this stage. So forth for the leads the cast (3328062). *
3.30 **News The Swiss Conspiracy (Jack Arnold 1975 US).** Derivative thriller starring **Dick Janssen** as a bank security expert (277333). To 5.00am.

- 6.20 Early Morning: Sesame Street (35577564).
7.15 The Babybushes Club (R) (9888324).
7.50 Skunk Duggs (5302290).
8.15 The Shop (R) (4722783).
8.35 When the Earth Is Cramen San Diego? (R) (6445696).
9.00 The Big Breakfast (37832).
10.00 Hangin' with Mr Cooper (R) (S) (21696). *
10.30 The Crystal Maze (R) (S) (43412). *
11.30 Back to the Future (R) (S) (9058257).
11.55 The Pink Panther (R) (2164782).
12.20 Soul Searching: New series of debates investigating moral issues from a Jewish, Muslim and Hindu perspective (S) (3447033). *
12.50 Babylon 5 (R) (S) (3734306). *
1.40 As It Happens. Dr Phil Hammond and Tony Gardner begin a day of on-the-spot reports from Birmingham City Hospital (7229870).
2.20 ~~NEWS~~ Les Girls (George Cukor 1957 US). Tragic Kay Kendall is the best thing about this good-looking but sorry musical - and we don't get enough of her. Everybody else seems to be having an off time of it, from Gene Kelly and Mitzi Gaynor in the leading roles to the Director's weak cast in the story. Concerns an ex-showgirl who publishes her steamy memoirs and finds herself sued with a lawsuit by two former colleagues (88122257). *
4.30 Countdown (S) (219). *
5.00 Technological Threat (5646412).
5.10 ~~NEWS~~ Tom Thumb (George Pal 1958 US). The first of four films featuring Peter Sellers tonight is MGM's fine musical version of the story, with Russ Tamblyn in the title role (55312412). *
6.50 News Summary and Weather (351783).
6.55 ~~NEWS~~ Two Way Stretch (Robert Day 1960 UK). Lovely old British comedy in which convinced Peter Sellers, Bernard Cribbins and David Lodge break out of jail to rob a bank and then the bank robs them. Sellers has the perfect role (54716122). *
8.30 Brookside. Jackie really thinks that forgetting Jimmy is easier said than done (S) (4509). *
9.00 As It Happens. Another report from Birmingham City Hospital (681677).
9.15 ~~NEWS~~ A Shot in the Dark (Blake Edwards 1964 UK). Sequel to The Pink Panther - Peter Sellers returns as the bumbling Inspector Clouseau, out to prove a French maid (Elle Simmonds) innocent of her husband's murder (84763764). *
11.10 The Adam and Joe Show (611561).
11.45 As It Happens. Back to Birmingham City Hospital, where no doubt things are hotting up (912702).
12.40 St Elsewhere. Vintage episode of the American medical drama (R) (S) (9146975).
1.40 As It Happens. (6552213).
2.45 ~~NEWS~~ Ordinances of Thin Airs (Anthony Simmons 1973 US). Rarely seen Peter Sellers outing in which he plays a down-and-out busker adopted by a group of London slum children. This was originally a vehicle for Danny Kaye, which gives you an idea about the tone (526517). To 4.45pm.

- ANGELA**
As London escape: 12.55pm Cross Wits
(9208677). 4.40m Shortland Street (7276141).
5.10 Wheel of Fortune (7787509). 6.00 Home
and Away Special (581677). 1.00am Films:
Independence (503994). 3.00am Football Extra
(9208888). 3.40am Instant Replay 1996
(6490623). 4.35-5.55am Film: The Pickwick
Papers (4534352).
- CHAMBER 1 NORTH EAST/YORKSHIRE**
As London escape: 12.55pm Coronation Street
(9208677). 5.10 Wheel of Fortune (7787509).
1.00am Instant Replay 1996 (4389772).
1.00am Not Fade Away (5525994). 3.00am
Film Special (581677). 1.00am Film:
The Pickwick Papers (4534352).
- CENTRAL**
As London escape: 12.55pm A Country Practice
(9208677). 4.40m Pongo's Tale: The Making of
10 Millions (1276141). 5.10 Wheel of
Fortune (7787509). 6.00-6.30pm Home and
Away Special (581677).
- HITV**
As London escape: 12.55pm Wets: Dinosaurs
(9208677). Wales: Poterson (9208677). 3.35
HTV News (1616325). 4.40m Pongo's Tale:
The Making of 10 Millions (1276141). 5.10
Wheel of Fortune (7787509). 6.00 Home and
Away Special (581677). 1.00am Film:
Independence (503994). 3.00am Football Extra
(9208888). 3.40am Instant Replay 1996
(6490623). 4.35-5.55am Film: The Pickwick
Papers (4534352).
- MEDIANET**
As London escape: 12.55pm Shortland Street
(9208677). 5.10 Wheel of Fortune (7787509).
1.00am Instant Replay 1996 (4389772).
1.00am Film: Independence (503994). 3.00am
Football Extra (9208888). 3.40am Instant
Replay 1996 (6490623). 4.35-5.55am Film: The
Pickwick Papers (4534352).
- WESTCOUNTRY**
As London escape: 12.20pm My Story/Illuminations
(2876667). 12.55 Wish You Were Here
(9208677). 1.00 Film: The Adventures of
Tom Sawyer (2636667). 2.50 Film: Bill and
Ted's Excellent Adventure (4675444). 4.30 50
Pump (61561). 5.30 Countdown (889). 6.00
News (480509). 6.05 Home (582783). 6.35
Ston, a Ship (741122). 7.00 Polity y Cwm
(89618). 9.25 Ymmydd! 9.50 Bare You
(3370567). 11.10 Film: Y Fargen (6401956).
10.10 Brookside (348783). 11.45 Wm Sam
Can WS Jones (634035). 11.15 News
Notes: Nos Galan (758180). 12.15am The
Adam and Josi Show (90582). 12.45-2.25am
The Adam and Josi Show (90582).
- SAC**
10.00am Film: Dr Doolittle (7823306).
12.35 The Pink Panther (9208939). 1.00 Slot
12.55 (57102). 1.30 Film: The Adventures
of Tom Sawyer (2636667). 2.50 Film: Bill and
Ted's Excellent Adventure (4675444). 4.30 50
Pump (61561). 5.30 Countdown (889). 6.00
News (480509). 6.05 Home (582783). 6.35
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Can WS Jones (634035). 11.15 News
Notes: Nos Galan (758180). 12.15am The
Adam and Josi Show (90582). 12.45-2.25am
The Adam and Josi Show (90582).

Radio

Choice



BBC correspondents predict who's going to be hot and who's not in 1997 in **Correspondents Look Ahead** (8.30pm R4). Looking backwards, **Consequences** (7.20pm R4) examines the effects of the Beeching Report on Britain's railways – did it save the railways or was it a national disaster?

- 6.00am Nick Barraclough 7.30
Sarah Kennedy 9.30 Alex Lester
11.30 Jimmy Young 1.00 Christmas
Specials 1.30 The Beatles at
the BBC 2.30 Ed Stewart 3.05 John
Dunn 7.00 Hayes Over Britain Live
of the Year 8.30 Dr Who 9.00 Dave
Allen Gobs Comic 10.00
Champagne and Roosters 10.30
Vintage Christmas: The Castleville
Collection 11.30 A Christmas to
Remember 12.30 Adrian Farrow
6.00-6.50am Steve Madden
- Radio 3**
- 6.00 AM *MORNING*
6.00am On Air
9.00 Morning Collection
10.00 Musical Encounters
12.00 Composer of the Week:
Handel
- 1.00 News: The BBC Orchestras.
Ramin Sult: Mother Goose. Iberia:
Concertos on Camera. Berlioz:
Symphonie Fantastique.
- 2.30 Ensemble.
3.15 The BBC Orchestras,
The Royal Albert Hall Machine.
5.15 International Record

- Adrian Jack considers the recovery legacy of the Piano Quintet by Schumann.
- 0.30.00 The Faber d'Hebe. Fantastical opera by Rameau in which Hebe, cup-bearer of the Gods, persuades her Olympian attendants to fly to the banks of the Seine with her and celebrate the most valued of the gods: love, youth, poetry, music and dance. Recorded at the Barbican Centre, London.
- 0.00 The Shetlic Show. Jeremy Nicholls introduces music from the age of 789 pop records, from the ever so distant, Mozambique and Scotland.
- 0.45 Composer of the Week: Tchaikovsky.
- 1.45 Jazz Notes. Live from Ronnie Scott's, Birmingham. Digby Fairweather introduces a New Year's jazz party with King Pleasure and the Black Boys.
- ...00 Through the Night.
- ...00-6.00am Sequence.

- Read 4
- 80.43 News, 12:58 PM
- 5:00 PM News
- 6.10 Farming Today
- 6.25 Prayer for the Day
- 6.30 Today
- 6.45 Before the Parapet
- 9.00 News
- 9.05 I Was That Teenager
- 9.45 Letter from Over Here
- 10.10 PM Daily Service
- 10.40 (FM) Something to Write Home About
- 10.15 (LM) On This Day
- 10.30 Drink Cooper's Necessary Pleasures
- 11.00 An Everyday Story of Eunukli
- 11.30 The Old Curiosity Shop, By Charles Dickens. Neil and his grandfather are forced to leave their jobs with Mrs Jarley (G/S).
- 12.00 Pat Company
- 12.25 Random Edition
- 1.00 The World at One
- 1.40 The Archers

- transform a new horse into the
next Grand National winner.
4.45 *The Short Story: The Last
Commitment*, by Jean
Clymowith.
5.00 PM
6.00 *The Shipping Forecast*.
6.00 *Sts. O'Clock News*.
6.15 *Going South*.
6.30 *A Little of What You Fancy*. By
H E Bates. (6/5).
7.00 *News*.
7.05 *The Archers*.
7.20 *Consequences*. (1/4).
8.00 *Ad Lib*.
8.10 *Correspondents Look Ahead*.
9.30 *Kaleidoscope Features*. Paul
Doust chronicles the decline of
seaside piers.
10.00 *Black at Bedtime Tonight*.
10.45 *Black at Bedtime: Scarlet and
Black*, by Stendhal. (2/10).
11.00 *Christmas with My Pup*.
11.30 *Look's Tots*. (3/5).
12.00 *News*.
12.30 *The Late Book: Through the
Looking Glass*. (2/7).
1.00 *The Shipping Forecast*.
1.00-6.00am *World Service*.

- Classic FM**
(630.10-101.9MHz)
6.00am Mike Hatch 9.00 Henry Kelly
10.00 Alan Howard 2.00
Competition 3.00 Jamiroquai 6.00-
Newswatch Review 6.30 Sara Khan
Ken Russell's Movie Classics 8.00
Newswatch 9.00 Alan Howard 10.00
Newswatch 1.00 Alan Freeman 4.00
6.00am Mark Griffiths.
- Virgin Radio**
(121.1-127.1MHz) **WUSM 94.1**
6.00am Jeremy Clark 10.00 Graham
10.00 Alan Howard 2.00 John
Nicky Hewson 7.00 (FM) Paul Coyte
7.00 (AM) Richard Porter 10.00am
Rock 'n' Roll Dance 2.00-6.00am
from 6.00am
- World Service**
(159.1MHz)
1.00am Newsweek 1.30 Outlook
1.55am Words of Faith 2.00am Newswatch
2.00am Newsweek 2.30am News
News 3.15 Sports Roundup 3.30
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on the Shetland Gae 5.30-6.00am
Newswatch 6.00am Newswatch 6.00am
Omnibus.

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| 1995) (4) 91-962383, 8.00 Rb Top | 51 |
| 1995) (4) 91-962383, 8.00 Rb Top | 52 |
| 1996) (4) 96-93225, 12.00 The | 53 |
| Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the | 54 |
| Savannah (1995) (1) 91-0381, 8.00 | 55 |
| Only the Strong (1974) 62, 3.30-5.00m | 56 |
| Only the Strong (1974) 63, 4.49 | 57 |
| My Movies | 58 |
| ...00m She Led Two Lives (1995) | 59 |
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23. 23rd American Football League (AFL) (1960-1969) 121
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Going Out

CINEMA NEW RELEASES
101 ON MAY 24: 12:30, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

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| 21pm, 3:30pm Stars on the Green | 70 |
| 6:00pm Soapbox.ABC 11pm, 3:30pm, | 71 |
| on Southern.ABC 12:30pm, 3:25pm Stars | LE |
| at 12:30pm, 3:25pm Stars on the Green | 72 |
| at 12:30pm, 3:25pm Stars on the Green | 73 |
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At the double
Greg Wood sees the darts
revival gather pace, page 21

sport

Rugby's powder keg
Chris Hewett on union's
survival test, page 22



Campbell attacks English attitudes

Cricket

DEREK PRINGLE
reports from Harare

The weather may have settled it but it was the Zimbabwe captain, Alistair Campbell, who defiantly had the last say as this series finally spluttered to a draw after the last day's play was abandoned at lunch without a ball being bowled. Responding to claims by his opposite number, that England would have run out winners had both games been uninterrupted by rain, Campbell felt his opponents were "clutching at thin air".

"It's been one of the easier series for us," he said afterwards. "I really don't think there's that much between ourselves, New Zealand and England." A point he emphasised when he named the England players - Stewart (to bat only), Knight, Gough, Croft and Crawley - he felt might on current form get a game for Zimbabwe. A side, who as their captain pointed out, are probably only currently bottom-rated because of their constant visits to the subcontinent, a place where few travel well.

For England, it was damnation with the faintest hint of praise and Campbell was clearly miffed when he delivered his verdict. What has clearly irked the home side most however - judging by the amount of times Campbell repeated the phrase - were the claims made by David "We flipping murdered em" Lloyd, in the aftermath of the drawn Bulawayo Test.

"To keep saying they outplayed us is an astounding claim," Campbell ranted. "Why can't they shrug off their superiority complex and just accept that we've matched them. It's monotonous to hear them keep saying that they've murdered us and a little bit of credit wouldn't go astray." He has a point and England have been notoriously glum in applauding opponents over recent series.

However, as is nearly always the case, the truth is out there lying somewhere between the polar opposites of propaganda now churned out as a matter of course by most cricket teams.

That said, it has been England who have had the better chances of winning this series, though it was more by opportunism than consistently superior cricket, the likes of which Australia would have played had they been here instead of reviving old enemies in Melbourne.

Unlike the Australians, whose superiority complex is deep-seated and utterly unquestioned, ours comes in spurts, usually at home where familiarity seems to breed contentment rather than the apathy that appears to set in abroad - an affliction that weakens resolve and one that is often caused by the numbing routine endemic to most long tours.

Interestingly, one player described his experience of the current tour, as being like that of the television reporter in *Groundhog Day*. This is a film where one man's dull day in a hick American town, is replayed over and over, until he is able to avoid all the pitfalls



David Lloyd (left), the England coach, talks to his assistant, John Emburey, prior to the umpires' decision to abandon play in Harare yesterday

Photograph: Clive Mason/Allsport

that befell him on that original first day.

Unfortunately, that has not quite been the experience of the majority of England's players here, who unlike the Dan Ackroyd character in the film, have struggled to come to terms with the repetitive slowness of the pitches and the wearying monotony of rain-drenched cricket grounds.

It is a point amplified by England's pathetic batting in the first innings of the last Test at

Harare Sports Club. A performance that was simply unprofessional, given that it was their fourth encounter on that turgid surface.

England's main problem is that they are erratic, too often basing half-baked strategies upon sandy foundations. Atherton, like his predecessor Gooch, tends to lead by inspiration and perspiration, rather than force of personality. A method that is over-dependent upon the immediate form of the captain,

which as we know - apart from the West Indies series of 1991 - is about the direst of Atherton's career.

When England have failed in the past, it was invariably because Atherton, a monolith of defiance, had failed too. Now that he cannot even get started (he scored 34 runs in four Test innings) his team are listing in seas where even the minnows like Zimbabwe have sharp teeth.

It would be unfair to dwell

solely on the negatives of a Test series that was over before it really got going. By the same token, neither can positives be given the usual kite mark of approval without some misgivings about the strength of the opposition. Zimbabwe's bowling, with Paul Strang, is substantially better than their batting.

With that in mind, England can take heart from the maturing composure of John Crawley, who was the only batsman to remain unperturbed by the slug-

gish nature of the pitches: no mean feat when you play most of your county matches at Old Trafford, one of the truest and quickest surfaces in England.

Other assets emerged too, such as Robert Croft, a competitor as well as an off-spinner, likely to delight as many east, as west of the Severn bridge. His bristling combative qualities were shared by the likes of Darren Gough, Nick Knight and Nasser Hussain, as well as by old stagers like Alec Stewart.

It is eight years since England last drew a series abroad and even that was in New Zealand, their next opponents, and the only overseas side England have beaten over a series, since Mike Gatting retained the Ashes 10 years ago. If that urn is to return next summer, England must first convince a growing legion of sceptics and win well in New Zealand.

Harare Test: Zimbabwe 156 (G.J. White 4-18, H.H. Strang 4-43) and 196 (S.A.J. Stewart 100, G.P. Thompson 50) v Zimbabwe 215 (D.W. Flower 73, D. Gough 4-40); Zimbabwe drew with England.

Clark accepts 'glorious' City challenge

Football

GUY HODGSON

The 1996-97 season has yet to reach its six months and Manchester City have appointed their fifth manager. Frank Clark, who left Nottingham Forest because he said he felt like a turkey waiting for Christmas, accepted the job that has become football's equivalent of the roaring train when he took over at Maine Road yesterday.

Clark signed a three and a half year contract to replace Phil Neal, who had held the manager's position on a temporary basis since Steve Coppell resigned in November. Neal will leave City but a more shocking departure is that of first-team coach Tony Book, whose sacking ends a 30-year link with the club.

Clark, 53, took a training session yesterday morning and then

attended a "meet the new manager" press conference that has become a regular fixture. "This is a glorious opportunity," he said. "I know that's been said many times before but a club that gets 30,000 to a game when it's fourth from the bottom of the First Division and takes 6,000 fans to an away game at Barnsley has massive potential. It doesn't sound like a job from hell to me."

Others might not agree. George Graham and Dave Bassett turned down the position and Coppell gave it up after 32 days, citing stress. In the last seven months City have been relegated from the Premiership, are in the First Division relegation zone and have won only two of their past 11 matches. Add £2m of debt, rumours of boardroom takeovers and the disruption of a new share issue, and the scale of Clark's task becomes apparent.

Maine Road's catalogue of chaos

THREE DECADES OF MANCHESTER CITY MANAGERS: 1965-71 Joe Mercer 1971-73 Malcolm Allison. 1973 Johnny Hart. 1973-74 Ron Saunders. 1974-79 Tony Book. 1979-80 Malcolm Allison. 1980-83 John Bond. 1983 John Benson. 1983-86 Billy McNeill. 1986-87 Jimmy Fittell (former general manager). 1987-89 Mel Machin. 1989-90 Howard Kendall. 1990-93 Peter Reid. 1993-95 Brian Horton. 1995-96 Alan Ball. 1996 Steve Coppell. 1996 Phil Neal. 1996 Frank Clark.

Caretaker managers not listed

Eleven days after walking away from boardroom uncertainty at the City Ground, he was not deterred. "There's vast potential at the club," he said. "I know the supporters are fed up of hearing the word 'potential', but it is a club where, if you get it right, the sky is almost the limit."

"There'll be money to spend, and that's obviously a big help. I will be assessing the playing staff as quickly as possible. There's some very good players at Manchester City, players who have had a difficult time over the last nine months or so. Every

player will be given a chance to show they can play a part here."

That money will come with the share issue which will raise £10.8m next month. Neal had asked to spend some of it but, when it became apparent he would not get the authorisation, his call for backing, paradoxically, moved the board in the opposite direction. Saturday's defeat at Barnsley hastened the process and the chairman, Francis Lee, had his holiday in the Caribbean interrupted to finalise Clark's appointment.

Being Manchester City, how-

ever, the transfer of power could not go entirely smoothly and Clark had to spend an embarrassing half-hour in his car outside the club's Platt Lane training ground yesterday morning while Neal cleared his desk.

Not that the departing man appeared to hold a grudge. "I had been in bed all day with flu since Saturday, when I got the call yesterday afternoon to meet representatives of the board," Neal said. "When I realised Frank was bringing his own management team, there was only one way forward."

"The SOS I had been sending out and my frankness may have played a part in getting some positive action on the managerial front for the long-term good of Manchester City. Maybe my words did not go down well in all quarters but that's the way I am. You get what you see. I wish Frank all the best and I'm just

sorry it has not been possible for him to find a place for me."

There will be sadness among supporters, too, that no place is found on Clark's staff for Book, who was still referred to throughout the club as "Skip" in deference to his captaining the team to the championship in 1968, the FA Cup in 1969 and the European Cup-Winners' Cup in 1970.

The 62-year-old also managed the club for five years in the 1970s and was in charge when they won their last major honour, the 1976 League Cup. He also guided City to the runners-up spot behind Liverpool in the old First Division in 1976-77 yet was demoted to allow the return of Malcolm Allison in 1979.

If Clark achieves anything close to those achievements, he will be lauded as a genius. Book's sacking was a shabby way to herald a new era.



Frank Clark at Maine Road yesterday Photograph: Emipics

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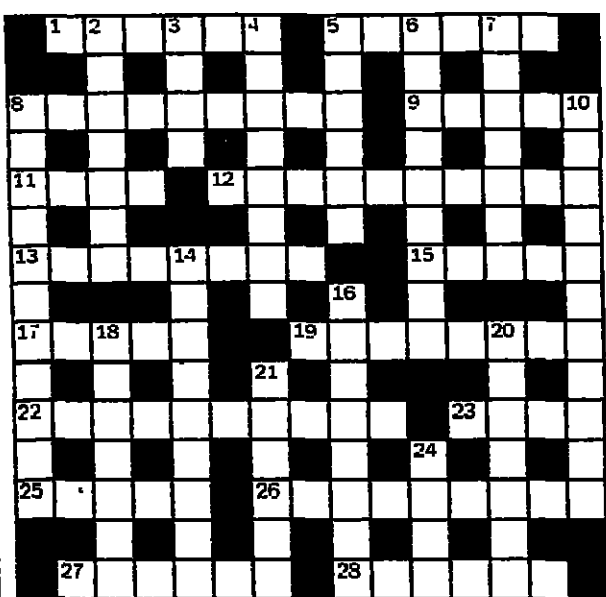
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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3183, Tuesday 31 December

By Porcia



- ACROSS**
- Prepare to be reconciled (4,2)
 - Soldiers right about number's being cut down (6)
 - It clearly protects food (5,4)
 - Way to accommodate family without money (5)
 - It fits round the middle window (4)
 - Ropey lot of players? (6,4)
 - About to imbibe one drink of wine (8)
 - Accepted duty towards tropical island (5)
 - Turn pale being without a means of transport (5)
 - Minor incident that attracts a fair crowd? (8)
 - Soundly rejected in every respect (10)
 - Sailor's back, operating out of Scottish port (4)

- Firm has nothing in stock (5)
- Unable to get off? (9)
- Light energy is occupying old philosopher (6)
- Initially, try to calm trapped river bird (6)
- DOWN**
- Present number under discussion (2,5)
- Therefore is found in the later gospels (4)
- Pure soft metal brought in advance (8)
- Continue to keep academic in check (6)
- Possibly get ideas about new name (9)
- Smart move ringing American in the USA (7)
- Somehow crash twice and be out of European race (11)
- Flipping childish games? (11)
- Good uncle about old French dialect (6,3)
- Number in control of conservation body prove hostile (8)
- Refuse to leave key in lock-up (7)
- Language society produces Christian book (7)
- Preferred to order different ones (6)
- Short of extra box (4)

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